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PERLYCROSS.

BY R. D. BLACKMORE.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LAW OF THE LAND.

ONE comfort there was among all this trouble, and terror, and perplexity, —little Jess was not dead, as reported, nor even inclined to die, just at present. It was true that she had been horribly slashed with a spade, or shovel, or whatever it might have been ; and had made her way home on three legs by slow stages, and perhaps with many a fainting fit. But when she had brought her evil tidings, and thrown down her staunch little frame to die, at the spot where she was wont to meet her master, it happened that Mr. Sharland crossed the garden from the stables. This was a veterinary surgeon, full of skill and large of heart, awake to the many pangs he caused in systems finer than the human, and pitiful to the drooping head and the legs worn out in man's service. In a moment he had gathered up the story of poor Jess, and he said, " If any dog deserves to be saved, it is this faithful little dear." Then he pulled off his coat, and tucked up his sleeves, and pronounced with a little pomposity (for a good man should make his impression): " Deep cut across the humerus ; compound fracture of the ulna ; will never do much with that limb again. But if the little

thing is only half as sagacious as she is faithful, and pyretic action does not supervene, we shall save her life ; and it is worth saving."

Jess licked his hand, as if she understood it all, and resigned herself to human wisdom. And now she had a sweet bed in a basket, airy and buoyant, yet proof against cold draughts ; and there she was delighted to receive old friends, with a soft look of gratitude in large black eyes, and a pretty little quiver of the tail too wise to wag for fear of arousing their anxiety. Pixie, the pug, had many qualms of jealousy, as well as some pangs of deep interest, for what dog, however healthy, could feel certain in his heart that he might not be reduced to the same condition ? And he was apt to get a human kick, when he pressed his kind inquiries.

But upon the loftier level of anthropic interests, less of harmony prevailed and more of hot contention. The widowed lady of the house had felt her loss intensely ; and with the deeper pain, because her generous nature told her of many a time when she had played a part a little over the duty of a loyal wife. Her strong will, and rather imperious style, and widely different point of view, had sometimes caused slight disagreements between the Spanish lady and the English

squire ; and now she could not claim the pleasure of having waived herself to please him. But she had the sorrow of recalling how often she had won the victory, and pushed it to the utmost, and how seldom she had owned herself in the wrong, even when she had perceived it. A kinder and a nobler husband no woman was ever blessed with ; and having lost him, how could she help disparaging every other man, as a tribute to his memory ?

Even with her daughter Inez she was frequently provoked, when she saw the tears of filial love or heard the unconsidered sigh. "What is her loss, compared with mine ? But for this child, he would have loved me more. Shallow young creature, like a tinkling zither she will start a new tune in a week or two." Such were her thoughts ; but she kept them to herself, and was angry with herself for forming them.

So it may be supposed what her fury was, or rather her boundless and everlasting rage, when she heard of the mis-reant villainy which could not long be concealed from her. Her favourite maid, Tamar Haddon, was the one who first let fall an unwary word ; and that young woman received a shock which ought to have disciplined her tongue for life. With a gaze and a gesture there was no withstanding, her mistress tore out of her everything she knew, and then with a power of self-control which few men could have equalled, she ordered the terrified damsel away, and sat down alone to think miserably.

How long she stayed thus was unknown to any ; for Tamar made off with all speed to her room, and was seized with a fit of hysterics. But the lady's only movement was to press one hand upon her labouring heart. By and by she rose, and unlocked the door of her little oratory, a place not very often favoured with her presence. There she took down a crucifix of ivory (not the Indian, but the African, which hardens and whitens with the lapse of

years, though green at first, as truth is) and set it upon a velvet shelf, and looked at it without much reverence. In the stormy times, when Spain was writhing under the heel of an infidel, her daughters lost their religious grounding and gained fierce patriotism. "My Country is my God," was a copy set in schools.

At first she looked with scorn and pity at such meek abandonment. What had her will and heart to do with mild submission, drooping head, and brow of wan benignity ? But the sculptor had told more than that. He had filled the sufferer's face with love, and thrilled the gaze of death with sweet celestial compassion ; so well had the human hand conveyed the tender heart of heaven. The sting of mortal injuries began to grow less venomous. The rancorous glare was compelled to soften, and suffused with quivering tears. She had come to have a curse attested and a black vow sanctified ; but earthly wrong and human wrath were quelled before the ruth of heaven and conquest of the Tortured One. She fell upon her knees, and laid her hands upon the spike-torn feet ; and her face became that of a stricken woman, devoted to sorrow, but not to hate.

How long this higher influence would last is quite another point, especially with a woman. But it proved at least that she was not altogether narrow, and hard, and arrogant. Then she went to her bed and wept for hours ; and perhaps her reason was saved thereby. At any rate her household, which had been in wretched panic, was saved from the fearful outburst, and the timid cast-up of their wages.

On the following morning she was calm, at least to all outward semblance, and said not a word to any one of the shock she had suffered yesterday. But as soon as business-time allowed, she sent for Mr. Webber, the most active member of the steady firm in which her husband had placed confidence. He was good enough to

come at once, although, as he told his nervous wife, he would have preferred an interview with the lioness which had just escaped from a travelling menagerie. But like all other terrors, when confronted, this proved tolerably docile; and upon his return he described this foreign lady's majestic beauty, and angelic fortitude, in warmer terms than his wife thought needful over his own mahogany. After recounting all he knew, and being heard with patience, he had taken instructions which he thought sagacious and to the purpose, for they were chiefly of his own suggestion.

Now this Mr. Webber was a shrewd, as well as a very upright man, but of rather hasty temperament, and in many of his conclusions led astray, without the least suspicion of it, by prejudices and private feelings. One of his favourite proverbs was, "A straw will show how the wind blows"; and the guiding straw for him was prone to float on the breath of his own favour. Although he knew little of Dr. Fox, he was partly prepared to think ill of him according to the following inclination. Waldron Webber, the lawyer's eldest son and godson of the brave Sir Thomas, had shown no capacity for the law, and little for anything else, except a good thumb for the gallipots. Good friends said, "What a doctor he will make!" and his excellent mother perceived the genius, and felt how low it would be to lament that such gifts were seldom lucrative till half the life is over. So the second son took to the ruler, and the elder to the pestle, instruments of equal honour, but of different value. And Waldron, although his kind father had bought him a snug little practice at Perlycombe, was nibbling at the bottom of the bag at home, while his brother cast in at the top of it. Why was this? Simply because young Fox, the heir of a wealthy family, had taken it into his wicked head to drop down from the clouds at Perlycross. It was true that he had bought a practice there; but his predecessor

had been a decent fellow, observing the rules of the profession. If a man could not pay for it let him not be ill; or at any rate go to the work-house and be done for in the lump. But this interloper was addicted to giving tick unlimited, or even remission of all charges, and a cure (when nature would not be denied) without the patient paying for it, if he had no money. One thing was certain, this could not last long; but meanwhile a doctor of common sense was compelled to appeal to his parents.

"All cannot be right," Mr. Webber senior had observed with emphasis, when he heard the same tale from his son's bosom friend, Jervis Jackson of Perliton. "There are certain rules, my dear, essential to the existence of all sound professions; and one of the most fundamental is, to encourage nobody who cannot pay. This Fox must be a sadly Radical young man, though his family is most respectable. Mischief will come of it, in my firm opinion."

The mischief was come, and in a darker form than the soundest lawyer could anticipate. Mr. Webber lamented it; and his wife (who had seen Jemmy waltzing at a Taunton ball with one of her pretty daughters, and been edified with castles in the air) lifted up her hands and refused to listen to it, until she thought of her dear son. "If it is the will of God," she said, "we must accept it, Theodore." But this resignation is not enough for an attorney with a criminal case in hand. Lady Waldron had urged despatch, and he knew that she was not to be trifled with. He had taken the blacksmith's deposition, which began as if his head were on the anvil, as well as Farmer John's, and Channing's, and that of Mr. Jakes the schoolmaster. And now it was come to Monday night, and nothing had been heard of Fox.

But it was not so easy to know what to do. There was no police force as yet to be invoked with certainty of some energy, and the Bow-

Street-Runners, as they were called (possibly because they never ran), had been of no service in such cases, even when induced to take them up. Recourse must be had to the ancient gear of magistrate and constable; for to move any higher authorities would require time and travel. Strong suspicion there might be, but no strong chain of evidence; for no connection could be established (whatever might be the inference) between the occurrence at Susscot and the sacrilege at Perlycross. Moreover, our ancient laws are generally rough, and brisk, and able-bodied to stick out bravely for the purse, but leave the person to defend itself. If it cannot do this after death, let it settle the question with its Maker; for it cannot contribute to the realm, and belongs to the resurrection. This larger view of the matter will explain to the live content how it came to pass that the legislature (while providing, for the healthy use of anatomy, the thousands of criminal bodies despatched for the good of their choicer brethren) failed to perceive any duty towards those who departed this life in the fear of God, after paying their rates and taxes, for the term prescribed by heavenly statute. In a word, when the wicked began to fall short (through clemency human or divine) no man of the highest respectability could make ure of what he left behind. Only, by the ancient Common Law, to dig him up again without a faculty was indictable as a misdemeanour.

Mr. Webber was familiar with all these truths, and obliged to be careful of their import. If the theft of a sheep could be brought home to Fox, the proceeding would have been more simple and the penalties far heavier. But, for his enemies, the social outrage was the thing to look at. As it stood, there was small chance yet of saddling the culprit with legal guilt; nevertheless if the tide of general opinion set against him, even the noblest medical science must fail to make head against it. And the first

step was to give some public form to the heinous accusation, without risk of enormous damages. Hence the application to Mr. Mockham, under the name of Tapscott, as before related, and justly refused by that magistrate. Mr. Webber of course did not appear, nor allow his name to be quoted, knowing how small the prospect was of the issue of a warrant. But his end was gained, for all who were present (including the magistrate himself) left the place with dark and strong suspicion against the absent doctor. The question was certain now to be taken up by county journals; whereupon the accused might well be trusted to do something foolish, even if nothing more were learned from the stealthy watch kept on him.

There was much to justify this view; for Fox did many foolish things, and even committed blunders, such as none but the sagest of the sage could avoid in his position. He was young, and hot of blood, and raging at the sweet readiness of his friends (as such dastards dared to call themselves) to accept the wicked charge against him on such worthless evidence. Now was the time for any generous nature to assert itself; for any one with a grain of faith, or even of common charity, to look him in the face, and grasp his hand, and exclaim with honest anger: "Not a word of those cursed lies do I believe. You are an honest fellow, Jemmy, whatever skulks and sneaks may say; and if any one says it in my presence, down he goes like a dabchick." Did any one do this, of all who had been so much obliged to him, or even of those who without that had praised him in his prosperous days and been proud of his acquaintance? It made his young heart cold with bitterness, and his kind eyes flashed with scorn, when even young fellows of healthy nature, jovial manners and careless spirit, spied something of deepest interest across the road as he came by, or favoured him with a distant

nod, and a passing "How doo, Doctor?" perhaps with an emphasis on the title, suggestive of dissection. It was enough to sour any man of even bright intelligence and fair discrimination; for large indeed is the heart of him, and heavenly his nature, who does not judge of his brethren by their behaviour to this brother.

Yet there were some few who did behave to this poor brother as if they had heard of the name of Christ, or deserved, in a way, to do so. These were the very poor, who feel some gratitude for kindness, because it comes not as a right, but a piece of rare luck to them. "'Tis nort to I what the lad hath dood, and I'll never belave a' dood it. If it worn't for he, our little Johnny would be in churchyard, instead of 's cot." So spake one or two; and if the reasoning was unsound, why then, so much the worse for reason.

But a fine young farmer, of the name of Gilham (a man who worked hard for his widowed mother, at the north-west end of the parish) came forward like a brave Englishman, and left no doubt about his opinion. This young man was no clod-hopper; but had been at a Latin school founded by a great high-priest of the Muses in the woollen line, and worthy of the *infula*. Gilham had shown some aptness there, and power in the resurrection of languages called dead by those who would have no life without them. His farm was known as the "White Post," because it began with a grand old proof of the wisdom of our ancestors. Upon the mighty turnpike road from London even to Devonport, no trumpery stick of foreign fir, but a massive column of British oak had been erected in solid times for the benefit of wayfarers. If a couple of them had been hanged there, as tradition calmly said of them, it was only because they stopped the others, and owed them this enlightenment.

Frank Gilham knew little of Doctor Fox, and had never swallowed physic;

which may have had something to do perhaps with his genial view of the subject. "A man is a man," he said to his mother, as if she were an expert in the matter; "and Fox rides as straight as any man I ever saw, when his horse has not done too much parish-work. What should I do if people went against me like this, and wouldn't even stand up to their own lies? That old John Horner is a pompous ass; and Crang loses his head with a young horse by daylight. Where would his wits be, pulled out of bed at night, with a resurrection-man standing over him? I am thoroughly ashamed of the parish, mother; and though some of our land is under Lady Waldron, I shall go and see Fox, and stick up for him."

So he did; and though he was a younger man than Jenny, and made no pretence of even offering advice, his love of fair play and fine healthy courage were more than a houseful of silver and gold, or a legion of soldiers direct from heaven.

CHAPTER XIV.

REASONING WITHOUT REASON.

ONE of the most unlucky things that could befall an unlucky man in the hour of tribulation had befallen that slandered Fox; to wit the helpless condition of the leading spirit, and most active head, in the troubled parish of Perlycross. Mr. Penniloe was mending slowly; but his illness had been serious, and the violent chill in a low state of health had threatened to cause inflammation of the lungs. To that it would have led, there can be little doubt, but for the opportune return of Fox, and the speedy expulsion of Jackson. Now the difficulty was to keep the curate quiet; and his great anxiety to get to work prolonged the disability, even as a broken arm in splinters is not likely to do without them while the owner works a pump.

The doctor caught his patient, on

the Friday morning, groping his way through the long dark tunnel which underran the rectory, and just emerging with crafty triumph into the drive by his own main gate. Thyatira was gone to Jakes the butcher, after locking the front door and carrying off the key. The parson looked miserably thin and wan, but proud of this successful sortie. He was dressed as if for action in his Sunday clothes, though tottering on his black-varnished stick; while his tortoiseshell eyeglass upon its watered ribbon dangled across his shrunken chest. But suddenly all his scheme collapsed.

"Ah, ah, ah!" he began with his usual exclamation, while his delicate face fell sadly, and his proud simper waned into a nervous smile. "Fine morning, Fox; I hope you are quite well,—pleasant morning for a walk."

"It may be pleasant," returned the doctor, trying to look most awful; "but like many other pleasant things it is wrong. Will you do me the honour to take my arm!"

Fox hooked the baffled parson by the elbow, and gently led him towards his own front door, guilty-looking, sadly smiling, striving vainly to walk as if he were fit to contest a hurdle-race. But the cup of his shame was not full yet.

"Oh, sir, oh!" exclaimed Mrs. Muggridge, rushing in from the street with a dish of lamb's fry reposing among its parsley. "I never would have believed it, sir, if an angel was to speak the words. To think that he have come to this!"

"She refers to my moral condition, I fear." Mr. Penniloe held his head down, while the key he had thought to elude was used to restore him to safer durance. "Well, perhaps I was wrong; but I only meant to go a very short way, I assure you; only as far as the spot where my dear old friend is sleeping."

"What a blessing as we caught you, sir!" cried the impulsive Muggridge; while her master looked up in

sharp wonder, and the doctor frowned at her clumsiness.

"Not to the repairs, sir? Oh come, come, come!" Jenny cut in rapidly with this attractive subject.

"No, not even to the repairs, or I might even say, the arrest of ruin. Without the generosity of my dear friend, we never should have achieved so much for the glory of,—I will not speak proudly—for the doing up of our old church. Those who should have been foremost,—but no doubt they had good reason for buttoning up their pockets. Comparatively, I mean, comparatively; for they really did give something. Possibly, all that they could afford."

"Or all they thought they couldn't help. It was very hard upon them, sir. But you are getting into a rebellious humour. Sit down by the fire, and allow me to examine you."

"I will carry my rebellion further," said the invalid, after sitting down. "I know how kind you have been to me, kinder by far than I ever could deserve. And I believe it was the goodness of the Lord that delivered me from Jackson. He meant well; but he cannot be positive whether the lungs should be higher up, or deeper down than the liver. I have been examined, and examiner as well, at Oxford, and in some public schools; but the question has never arisen; and I felt myself unable to throw any light on it. Still it struck me that he ought to know, as a properly qualified medical man."

"No, sir, no. That is quite a trifle. That should never have lessened your confidence in him." Dr. Fox spoke so gravely, that Mr. Penniloe was angry with his own inside.

"Well, after all, the mind and soul are the parts that we should study. I see that I have wronged poor Jackson, and I will apologise. But what I have to say to you is this,—even if I am not to take a walk, I must be allowed some communication with people of the parish. I have no idea what is going on. I am isolated as if I had the

plague, or the cholera of three years ago. Let me see Channing, or Jakes, or Mr. Horner, or even Robson Adney."

"In a day or two, sir. You are getting stronger fast, and we must not throw you back. You must have a little patience. Not a service has been missed; and you can do no good."

"That may be true," said the parson with a sigh. "Unhappily they always tell me that; but it does not absolve me. All my duties are neglected now. Three pupils, and not a lesson have I heard them. How can that new boy get on without me? A very odd youth, from all that I am told; he will require much attention. No, no, it will never do, Fox. I know how kind everybody has been, in doing with only one sermon; and the Lord has provided an uncommonly good man. But I feel as if there was something wrong. I am sure you are hiding something from me. I am not allowed to see anybody; and even Fay looks odd sometimes, as if the others were puzzling her. And the pupils too must have heard of something bad; for poor little Michael has been forbidden to talk to any of them. What is it? It would hurt me less to know, than to keep on wondering, and probably imagine it worse than it is. And good or bad for my bodily health, my first duty is not to myself, but to those entrusted to me."

Mr. Penniloe had spoken with more excitement than he often showed when in his usual health, and the doctor had observed it with some alarm. But he had long foreseen that this must come; and it might come in a more abrupt and dangerous manner when he was out of reach. So he made up his mind at once, and spoke without further hesitation.

"Yes, sir, a most disgraceful thing has happened in this parish; and it is better perhaps that you should know it, than be kept in the dark any longer. But you must not be angry with me, though I have given all the

orders which puzzled you. It was not for my own sake, you may be sure; for God only knows how much I have longed for your advice in this miserable affair. And yet, before I tell you, you must promise to do nothing whatever about it for at least three days. By that time you will be yourself again, if we can keep you quiet, and if you take this sad blow with your usual strength of mind,—and piety."

The parson began to tremble, and the blue lines on his delicate forehead shone like little clues of silk. He fingered his open glasses, and began to raise them, until it struck him that he might seem rude if he thus inspected Fox throughout his narrative. A rude act was impossible to him; so he leaned back in his ancient chair, and simply said, "Be quick, my friend, if you can thus oblige me."

The young man watched him very narrowly while he told his dreadful tale; and Thyatira in the passage sobbed and opened her smelling-bottle, for she had been making urgent signs and piteous appeals from the back-ground to the doctor to postpone this trial. But her master only clasped his hands, and closed his quivering eyelids. Without a word he heard the whole; though little starts, and twitching lips, and jerkings of his gaitered foot, made manifest that self-control was working at high pressure.

"And who has done this inhuman thing?" asked Mr. Penniloe at last; after hoping that he need not speak until he felt that he could speak. "Such things have been done about Bristol, but never in our county. And my dear friend, my best friend Tom! We dare not limit the mercy of God; for what are we? ah, what are we? But speaking as a frail man should, if there is any crime on earth——" He threw his handkerchief over his head, for what can the holiest man pronounce? And there was nothing that moved him more to shame, than even to be called a "holy man."

"The worst of it is," said Dr. Fox, with tears in his eyes, for he loved this man, although so unlike him in his ways of thought; "the worst of it is,—or at least from a wretchedly selfish point of view, the worst—that all the neighbourhood has pitched upon the guilty person."

"Who is supposed to have done this horribly wicked thing? Not Gowler?"

"No, sir; but somebody nearer home; somebody well-known in the village."

"Tell me who it is, my dear fellow. I am sure there is no one here who would have done it."

"Everybody else is sure there is. And the name of the scoundrel is,—James Fox."

"Fox, it is not a time for jokes. If you knew how I feel, you would not joke."

"I am not joking, sir," said Fox, and his trembling voice confirmed his words. "The universal conclusion is, that I am the villain that did it."

"My dear friend, my noble fellow!" The man sprang up on his feeble legs, and took both of Jemmy's strong thick hands in his quivering palms, and looked at him. "I am ashamed of my parish; and of myself, as a worthless labourer. And with this crushing lie upon you, you have been tending me, day and night, and shown not a sign of your bitter disdain!"

"I knew that you would acquit me, sir. And what did I care for the rest of them? Except one, of course,—well, you know what I mean, and I must now give up all hope of that. Now take a little of this strengthening stuff, and rest for a couple of hours."

"I will take the stuff, but I will not rest until you have told me upon what grounds this foul accusation has been brought. That I should be in this helpless state, when I ought to go from house to house—truly the ways of Providence are beyond our poor understanding."

The young man told him in a few hot words upon what a flimsy tale his

foes had built this damning charge, and how lightly those who called themselves his friends had been ready to receive it. He had had a long interview with Crang, and had shaken the simple blacksmith's faith in his own eyes; and that was all. Owing to the sharp frost of the night, there was no possibility of following the track of the spring-cart up the road, though its course had first been eastward, and in the direction of the Old Barn. For the same reason, all attempts had failed in the immediate scene of the outrage; and the crisp white frost had settled on bruised herbage and heavy footmark. "There is nothing more to be done in that way," the doctor finished with a bitter smile. "Their luck was in the right scale, and mine in the wrong one, according to the usual rule. Now, what do you advise me to do, dear sir?"

"I am never very quick, as some men are," Mr. Penniloe replied, without even the reproof which he generally administered to those who spoke of "luck." "I am slow in perceiving the right course, when it is a question of human sagacity. But the Lord will guide this for our good. Allow me to think it over, and to make it a subject of earnest prayer."

Fox was well content with this, though his faith in prayer was limited. But he knew that the clergyman was not of those who plead so well that the answer tallies with their inclinations. For such devoted labourers, when a nice preferment comes in view, lay it before the "Throne of Grace"; and the heavenly order always is, "Go thou into the fatter vineyard." Mr. Penniloe had not found it thus, when a college living was offered to him as a former Fellow at a time when he and his wife could scarce succeed in making both ends meet. The benefice being in a part of Wales where the native tongue alone prevailed, his ministry could be blest to none but the occupants of the rectory. Therefore he did not pray for guidance, but for grace to himself and wife (especi-

ally the latter) to resist this temptation without a murmur. Therein he succeeded, to the huge delight of the gentleman next upon the roll and equally ignorant of Welsh, whose only prayer upon the occasion was, "Thank the Lord, oh, my soul!"

In the afternoon, when Fox returned according to arrangement, he found his much-respected patient looking pale and sad, but tranquil. He had prayed as only those who are in practice can accomplish it; and his countenance showed that mind and heart, as well as soul, were fortified. His counsel to Fox was to withstand, and not to be daunted by the most insidious stratagem of the Evil One,—whose existence was more personal in those days than it now appears, and therefore met more gallantly—to pay no heed to furtive looks, sly whispers, cold avoidance, or even spiteful insults, but to carry himself as usual, and show an example to the world of a gentleman and a Christian.

Fox smiled in his sleeve, for his fist was sore with knocking down three low cads that day; but he knew that the advice was sound, and agreed with that of Squire Mockham, only it was more pacific and grounded on larger principles.

"And now, my dear young friend," the parson continued very earnestly, "there are two things I have yet to speak of, if you will not think me intrusive. You ought to have some one in the Old Barn to comfort and to cheer you. The evenings are very long and dark, and now I suppose you will have to spend the greater part of them at home. Even without such trouble as yours, a lonely man is apt to become depressed and sometimes bitter. I have heard you speak of your sister, I think,—your only sister, I believe,—and if your father could spare her——"

"My father is much stronger, sir. But I could not think of bringing Christie here. Why, it would be wretched for her. And if anybody insulted her——"

"Who could insult her, in your own house? She would stay at home mostly in that very quiet place, and have her own amusements. She would come across no one, but old Betty and yourself. It would feel lonely at first, no doubt; but a loving sister would not mind that. You would take care not to vex her by speaking of any of the slights you suffered, or even referring to the subject at all, whenever it could be avoided. If it were only for one week, till you get used to this sad state of things, what a difference it would make to you! Especially if she is of a lively nature. What is her character,—at all like yours?"

"Not a bit. She has ten times the pluck that I have. I should like to hear any one dare to say a word against me before Christie. But it is not to be thought of, my dear sir. A pretty coward I should be to bring a girl here to protect me!"

"What is her name? Christine, I suppose. A very good name indeed, and I dare say she deserves it." The curate looked at Fox, to have his inference confirmed; and the young man burst into a hearty laugh,—his first for a most unaccustomed length of time.

"Forgive me, sir. I couldn't help it. I was struck with the contrast between your idea of a Christian, and Christie's. Though if any one called her anything else, he would have a specimen of zeal. For she is of the militant Christian order, girt with the sword of the Spirit. A great deal of St. Peter, but not an atom of St. John. Thoroughly religious, according to her lights, and always in a flame of generosity. Her contempt for any littleness is something splendid; except when it is found in any one she loves. She is always endeavouring to 'see herself from the outside,' as she expresses it; and yet she is inside all the time. Without any motive that a man can see, she flares up sometimes like a rocket, and then she lies rolling in self-

abasement. She is as full as she can be of reasoning, and yet there is not a bit of reason in her. Yet somehow or other, everybody is wonderfully fond of Christie."

"What a valuable addition to this parish! And the very one to keep you up, in this mysterious trial. She would come at once, of course, if she is as you describe her."

"Come, sir! She would fly,—or at least post with four horses. What a sensation in Perlycross! But she is not the one to live in a cupboard and keep silence. She would get up in your pulpit, sir, and flash away at your churchwardens. No, I could not think of bringing her into this turmoil. If I did, it would serve me right enough never to get out of it."

"Very well. We shall see," Mr. Penniloe said quietly, having made up his mind, after Fox's description, to write for this doughty champion, whatever offence might come of it. "Now one other matter, and a delicate one. Have you seen Lady Walldron since this terrible occurrence?"

"No; I have feared to go near the house. It must be so awful for them. It is horrible enough for me, God knows. But I am ashamed to think of my own trouble, in comparison with theirs. I shall never have the courage to go near them."

"It would be a frightful visit; and yet I think that you should go there. But it is most difficult to say. In all the dark puzzles and trials of this world, few men have been placed, I should say, in such a strange dilemma. If you go, you may shock them beyond expression. If you don't go, you must confirm their worst ideas. But there is one who holds you guiltless."

"I am afraid that you only mean—the Lord," Jemmy Fox said, with his eyes cast down. "It is out of my luck to hope for more. He is very good, of course—but then He never comes and does it. I wish that you meant some one nearer."

"My dear young friend, my dear young friend! Who can be nearer to us?" The parson thought of his own dark times, and spoke with reproach, but not rebuke. "I ought to have meant the Lord, no doubt. But in plain truth, I didn't. I meant a mere mortal, like yourself. Oh, how we all come down to ground! I should have referred to Providence. What a sad relapse from duty!"

"Relapse more, sir, relapse more!" cried the young man, insisting on the human vein. "You have gone so far, that you must speak out, as—as a messenger of good tidings."

"Really, Jemmy, you do mix things up"—the parson's eyes twinkled at this turn upon him—"in a very extraordinary manner. You know what I mean, without any words of mine."

"But how can you tell, sir? Oh, how can you tell? If I could only be sure of that, what should I care for anything?"

"Young man, you are sure," said Mr. Penniloe, placing his hand upon Jemmy's shoulder. "Or if you are not, you are not worthy to have faith in anything. Next to the word of God, I place my confidence in a woman's heart."

Fox said not another word. His heart was as full as the older man's; one with the faithful memory, and the other with the hopeful faith of love. But he kept out of sight, and made a stir with a box of powders and some bottles.

When he got home, in a better state of mind than he had been able to afford for a long time, out rushed somebody, and pulled him off his horse, and took the whole command of him with kisses.

"I will never forgive you, never!" cried a voice of clear music, out of proper pitch with tears. "To think that you have never told me, Jemmy, of all the wicked things they are doing to you!"

"Why, Christie, what on earth has brought you here? Look out! You

are going all to tatters with my spurs ! Was there ever such a headlong girl ! What's up now ?

"It won't do, Jemmy ; your poor mind is all abroad. I saw the whole thing in the 'Exeter Gazette.' You deserve to be called—anything, for behaving so to me."

CHAPTER XV.

FRIENDS AND FOES.

IN for a penny, in for a pound. Throw the helve after the hatchet. As well to be hanged for a sheep as a lamb. He that hath the name may as well enjoy the game.—These and other reckless maxims of our worthy grandsires (which they may have exemplified in their own lives, but took care for their own comfort to chastise out of their children) were cited by Miss Christie Fox, with very bright ferocity, for her poor brother's guidance. It was on the morning after her arrival, when she had heard everything there was to hear, and had taken the mastery of Old Barn as if it were her pony-carriage. Fox stood and looked at her in this queer old dwelling-place, which had once been the tithe-barn of the parish, but proving too far from the chief growth of corn had been converted by the Dean and Chapter into a rough and rambling, but commodious and roomy house ; for the tithes of *Perlycross* were fat, worthy of a good roof and stout walls.

She sat by the window in the full light of the sun,—for she never thought much about her complexion, and no sun could disparage it—a lovely girl, with a sweet expression, though manifest knowledge of her own mind. Her face was not set off by much variety of light and shade, like that of Inez Waldron,—dark lashes, or rich damask tint, or contrasts of repose and warmth ; but pure straightforward English beauty (such as lasts a lifetime) left but little to be desired, except the good

luck to please it. "There was not too much of her," as her father said—indeed he never could have enough—and she often felt it a grievance that she could not impress the majesty of her sentiments through lack of size ; but all that there was of her was good stuff, and there very well may be, as a tall admirer of hers remarked, "a great deal of love in five feet two."

However this specimen of that stature had not discovered that fact yet, as regards any other than her own kin ; and now with the sun from over Hagdon Hill throwing wintry light into her spring-bright eyes, she was making herself quite at home, as an English girl always tries to do, with her own belongings about her, while she was railing at this strange neighbourhood. Not that she meant even half of what she said, but her spirit was up, and being always high it required no great leap to get far above the clouds. And her brother kept saying, "Now you don't mean that," in a tone that made her do her very best to mean it.

As for avoiding the subject, and the rest of the cautious policy suggested by the peaceful parson, the young lady met that wise proposal with a puff of breath, and nothing more. In gestures, and what on a plainer face would have been called "grimaces," she was so strong, that those who had not that short-cut of nature to the meaning of the moment were inclined to scoff and mimic ; which they could not do at all, because it was not in them. Jemmy being some years older, and her only brother, felt himself responsible for the worst part of her character. He was conscious, when he thought about it, that he had spoiled her thoroughly, from the date of her first crawl on the floor until her path in life was settled. And upon the whole, the result was not so bad as to crush him with much self-reproach.

"All I want is, just to have the names of your chief enemies." This

valiant sister, as she spoke, spread forth an ivory *deltis*, as that arrangement then was called, a baby fan with leaves of no more substance than a wafer. "Have no fear, Jemmy; I will not kill them, unless my temper rises. You are so abominably forgiving, that I dare say you don't know their names."

"Not I," said the doctor, beginning to fill his after-breakfast pipe, for now he had no round to make among his patients of the paying class. "Chris, they are all alike; they have no ill-will at all against me, unless it is Jackson, and young Webber, and half a dozen other muffs perhaps, with a grudge because I have saved poor fellows they were killing. I have never interfered in any rich man's case, so they have no right to be so savage."

"They are dummies," answered Christie, just waving her hand, and then stopping it, as if they were not worth the trouble. "I don't mean them. They could never lead opinion. I mean people of intelligence, or at any rate of influence."

"Well really, I don't know any of that sort who have gone against me openly. Such people generally wait to hear both sides, unless their duty drags them into it. Both the churchwardens are against me, I believe. But that must be chiefly because they saw with their own wise eyes what had been done. You know, or perhaps you don't, but I do, what an effect is produced on the average mind by the sight of anything. Reason seems to fly, and the judgment is lost. But Horner is a very decent fellow, and I have been of some service to his family. Farrant is a man of great honesty and sense, but carried away perhaps for the moment. I hear that he is coming round to my side."

"Then I won't put down either of them. But come, there must be some one at the head of it."

"Upon my word, I don't think there is. Or if there is, he keeps quite in the background. It seems to be

rather a general conclusion than any conspiracy against me. That makes it so much harder to contend with. One proof of what I say is, that there has been no further application for a warrant since Mr. Mockham's refusal. If there were any bitter enemy, he would never have been content with that."

"I am not so sure of that," replied sage Christie, longing for a foe more definite. "I am not of course a lawyer, though papa was a magistrate before I was born, and ever since, and that gives me a great deal of insight. And I have come to the conclusion that there is some one, besides those poor little pill-grinders (you see what comes of taking to the pill-box, Jemmy), some one of a hateful nature, and low cunning, who is working in the dark against you. The mischief has been done, and they know that; and they don't want to give you any chance of putting your own case clearly and confounding them. You see that reel of silk now, don't you?"

"I see about fifty. What a child you are! Are you going to decorate a doll's house?"

"I never lose my temper with you, dear Jemmy, because you are so stupid. But if you can't see the force of it, I can. That reel of silk is an honest reel, a reel you know how to deal with. The end is tucked into a nick at the side, and you set to at once and thread your needle. But the one next to it is a rogue—same colour, same size, same everything, except that the maker has hidden the end, to hide his own short measure, so that you may hunt for it for half an hour. Even a man can see that, can't he? Very well, apply that to this frightful affair. If your enemies would only come forward, they would give you a chance to clear yourself. You would get hold of the end and unwind it, just as I bite off this knot. There! What can be easier than that, I'd like to know!"

"You are very clever, Christie, but

you don't see the real difficulty. Who would believe my denial on oath, any more than they would without it? I can offer no witness except myself. The man at the pits would avail me nothing, even if I could get hold of him. There was plenty of time after I left him for me to have been in the thick of it. I can prove no *alibi*. I have only my word to show that I was in this house while the miscreants were at work. It is the blackest piece of luck that poor George was so tipsy, and old Betty so buried in slumber. It is no good to deceive ourselves, my dear. I shall never be clearer of this foul charge till the fellows who did the thing are found out."

This was what Jemmy had felt all along; and no one knew better than himself how nearly impossible it is to bring such criminals to justice. But his sister was not to be discouraged.

"Oh, as for that, I shall just do this. I have money of my own, or at least I shall have a lot of it when I come of age next year. I'll find out the cleverest lawyer about here, a man who is able to enter into rogues, and I'll make him advertise a great reward, and promise him the same for himself if he succeeds. That is the only way to make them look sharp. A thousand pounds will be sure to tempt the poor dirty villains who must have been employed; and a thousand pounds will tempt a good lawyer to sell his own wife and family. Free pardon to every one, except the instigator. I wonder that you never even thought of that."

"I did think of it long ago. It is the first thing that occurs to an Englishman in any case of wrongdoing. But it would be useless here. I heard much of these cases when I was a student. They are far more frequent than the outer world supposes. But I won't talk about it. It would only make you nervous. It is not a thing for girls to dwell upon."

"I know that very well. I don't want to dwell upon it. Only tell me

why even a large reward would not be of any service."

"Because there is only a very small gang; and a traitor would never live to get his money. Rewards have been tried, but vainly, except in one case, and then the end was dreadful. For the most part, they manage so well that no one ever dreams of what has happened. In the present case, though a most daring one, the villainy would scarcely have been discovered, except for the poor little faithful dog. If she had been killed and thrown into the river, perhaps nothing would ever have been heard of it."

"Oh, Jemmy, what a dreadful thing to say! But surely you forget the blacksmith?"

"Not at all. His story would have come to nothing, without this to give it special meaning. Even as it is, no connection has been proved, though of course there is a strong presumption, between the affair at Susscot and the crime at Perlycross. There was nothing to show where the cart came from. Those fellows travel miles with them these long nights. There is an old chapelry at Monkswell, more than a mile from any house, and I firmly believe—but I will not talk about it."

"Then you know who did this! Oh, Jemmy, Jemmy, is it some horrible secret of your trade?" Christie leaped up, and away from her brother.

"I know nothing, except that it happened. I have not the least idea who the scoundrel is. Now no more of this, or you won't sleep to-night."

"I am not a coward,—for a girl at least. But this is a dark and lonely house. I shall have my bed put against the partition of your room before ever I go into it this night. Then you can hear me knock if I get frightened."

Miss Fox sat down, and leaned her head upon her hands for a moment, as in deep meditation upon the wrongs of humanity; and then she announced the result of her thoughts. "One thing is certain. Even you cannot

deny it. If the Government of this country allows such frightful things to be done, it is bound to provide every woman in the land with a husband to protect her, or at any rate to keep her courage up. If I had seen that cart at Susscot I should have died with terror."

"Not you. But I must make one rule, I see; and you know there are times when I will be obeyed. You have come here, my dear child, with the greatest kindness, and no small courage as well, just to keep up my spirits and console me in this trouble. I would never have let you come if I had known it; and now I will not have your health endangered. Back you go this very day, sad as I shall be without you, unless you promise me two things. One is that you will avoid these subjects, although you may talk of my position. And the other is, that you will not stir from this house except in my company; and when you are with me, you will be totally unconscious of anything anybody says, or looks,—uncivil, unpleasant, or even uncordial. You understand now that I am in earnest?"

Fox stuck his solid legs into a stiff position, and crested up his whiskers with his finger-tips; which action makes a very fine impression on a young man's younger sister.

"Very well, I agree to all of that," said Christie, a little too airily for one who is impressed with an engagement. "But one thing I must have before we begin the new code. Here are my tablets. As you won't tell the names of your enemies, Jemmy, I must have the names of your friends to set down. It won't require many lines, I fear, you gentle Jemmy."

"Won't it? Why all the good people about here are on my side, every one of them. First, and best of them all, Philip Penniloe. And then, Mr. Mockham the magistrate, and then Sergeant Jakes, the school-master. And after him, Thyatira Muggridge, a person of considerable

influence, because she takes hot meat, or pudding, in a basin to half the old women in the village, whenever her master can afford it and can't get through all of it. That is how they put it, in their grateful way. But it strengthens their tongues against his enemies, and they seem to know them, though he doesn't. Well, then there is Farrant, the junior churchwarden, coming round fast to my side. And Baker, the cooper, who made me a tub for salting my last pig; and Channing,—not the clerk, he is neutral still, but will rally to my side when I pay him twelve shillings, as I shall do to-morrow, for a pair of corduroys—but Channing the baker, a notable man, with a wife who knows everything about it, because she saw a dark man over the wall last summer, and he would not give his name. She has caused a reaction already and is confident of being right, because she got upon a pair of steps. Oh, you must not imagine that I am forlorn. And then there is Frank Gilham, last not least, a fine young fellow, and a thorough Englishman."

"I like that description. I hate foreigners—as a rule, I mean, of course," said Christie Fox, with a look of large candour, that proved what a woman of the world she was. "There may be good individuals among them when they have come to know what home-life means; but take them altogether, they are really very queer. But surely we ought to know a little more as to what it was Mrs. Baker Channing saw; and over the churchyard wall, you say?"

"Waste of time, Christie. Why it was back in August, when Harrison Gowler was staying here. And it was not the churchyard wall at all, but the wall of the rectory garden that she peeped over in the dark. It can have had nothing to do with it."

"I am not so sure of that. Things come out so oddly. You remember when my poor Flo was poisoned, how I found it out at last. I never left

off; I wouldn't leave off; prying, listening, tip-toeing, even spying, without any sense of shame. And I found it out at last—at last; and didn't I have my revenge? Oh, I would have hanged that woman if the law had been worth a farthing, and stuck her all over with needles and pins."

"You spiteful, and meanly vindictive little creature! But you never found it out by yourself, after all. It came out quite by accident."

"Well, and so will this. You take my word. I dare say I am stupid, but I always prove right. Yet we are bound to use the means of grace, as they tell us in every blessed sermon. Oh, come, I may go and see your pet parson. I'll be bound I shall not care for him an atom of an atom. I hate those perfect people; they are such a slur upon one. I like a good minister, who rides to hounds in pink, and apologises to the ladies every time he swears. But come, brother Jemmy, are there no more friends? I have put down all you mentioned, and the list looks very short. There must be a few more, for the sake of Christianity."

"To be sure there is one more, and a frightfully zealous one—certain to do more harm than good. A mere boy, though he flies into a fury at the word. Mr. Penniloe's new pupil,—preparing for the Church by tearing all across the country. He breaks down all the hedges, and he drives the sheep-dogs mad. He is mad as a March hare himself, by all accounts; but everybody likes him. His name is Horatio Peckover, but everybody calls him 'Hopper,' by *syncope*, as we used to say at school. One of his fellow-pupils, young Pike, who is a very steady-going young fellow and a fine rising fisherman, told me that Hopper is double-jointed; and they believe it devoutly. They tied him on a chair at his own request the other day, in order that he might learn his lessons. But that only made him worse than ever; for he capered

round the room, chair and all, until Mr. Penniloe sent to ask who was churning butter."

"What a blessing that boy must be in a sick house! But what has made him take up our case, Jemmy?"

"The demand of his nature for violent motion. Every day of his life, except Sunday, he scours the country for miles around. On foot, mind,—not on horseback, which one could understand. Moreover he is hot in my favour, because he comes from somewhere near Wincanton, and is a red-hot 'zon ov' Zummerzet,' and contemptuous of Devon. But it is not for me to inquire into motives. I shall want every single friend I can scrape together if what I heard this morning is anything like true. You asked me last night what Lady Waldron thought."

"To be sure, I did. It seemed most important. But now," continued Christie, as she watched her brother's face, "there are reasons why I should scarcely attach so much weight to her opinion."

"The chief reason being that you see it is against me. Well, truly you are a brave reasoner, my dear. But I fear that it is so. I am told that my name must never again be heard in the house where once I was so welcome."

"Oh, I am rather glad of that. That will go a long way in our favour. I cannot tell how many times I have heard, not from one but from all who have met her, that she is a most unpleasant, haughty person, even for a foreigner. It must lie very heavy on the poor woman's conscience that everybody says she helped, by her nasty nature, to shorten her poor husband's days. Possibly now—well that throws a new light. What has happened may very well have been done at the order of some of his relatives, who, knowing her character, suspect foul play. And of course she would like to hear no more about it. You know all those foreigners, how pat they are with poison."

"What a grand thing it is to have a sister!" Fox exclaimed, looking with astonishment at Christie, who was quite excited with her new idea. "Better almost to have a sister than—than—I mean than any one else. I almost feared to tell you my last piece of news, because I thought that it must upset you so. And behold, it has greatly encouraged you! But remember, on no account must you drop a hint, even to our best friends, of your last brilliant idea. What frightful things flow into the sweetest little head!"

"Well, I don't see at all why I should try to conceal it. I think it is a case for very grave suspicions. And if she spreads shameful reports about you, I'll soon let her know that two can play at that."

"Nonsense, my dear child. There is evidence against me; none, nor even a shadow of suspicion, against her. She loved Sir Thomas devotedly; and I always thought that jealousy was the cause of her coldness to his English friends. But to come to common sense again,—what I heard to-day settles my doubts as to what I should do. Penniloe thought that I should call at Walderscourt; though he saw what a difficult thing it was to do, and rather referred it to my own decision. I shrank from it more than I can describe. In fact, I could not bring myself to go; not for my own sake but for theirs. But this behaviour on her part puts a new aspect upon it. I feel myself bound, as an innocent man, to face her, however unpleasant it may be. It will only be the worse for putting off. I shall go this afternoon."

"I love to bring anything to a point. You are quite right," replied Christie, with her bright colour rising at the prospect of a brush. "Jemmy, dear, let me come with you."

"Not quite, you gallant Chris! No such luck for me. Not that I want you to back me up. But still it would have been a comfort. But you know it is out of the question for a stranger to call at such a time."

"Well, I fear it is, though I shouldn't mind that; but it would look very odd for you. Never mind; I won't be far away. You can leave me outside, and I will wait for you somewhere in the shrubbery, if there is one. Not that I would dream of keeping out of sight; only that they might be afraid to see me."

"They might reasonably fear it if you looked as you do now. Ferocity does not improve the quality of your smile, dear. What will mother say when you go home? And somebody else, perhaps? Now, you need not blush. I have a very high opinion of him."

"Jemmy, I won't have it; not another word! Get it out of your silly mind for ever. Men never understand such things. There's no romance in me, as goodness knows. But you'll never catch me marrying a man with none of it in him."

"You are too young to think of such things yet. Though sometimes even younger girls—but come along, let us have a breath of fresh air after all this melancholy talk. That footpath will take us up to Hagdon in ten minutes. You are eager to try our Old Barn style of victualling, and it suits the system better than your long late dinners. We dine at two o'clock. Come and get an appetite."

A short sharp climb, and with their lungs expanded they stood upon the breezy hill, and looked back at the valley. Before them rolled the sweep of upland, black in some places with bights of fired furze, but strewn with long alleys of tender green, where the flames had not fed, or the rains had wept them off. The soft western air, though the winter had held speech with it, kept enough of good will yet to be a pleasant change for those who found their fellow-creatures easterly. And more than that, the solemn distance and expanse of trackless grey, hovering with slow wings of sleepy vapour touched with sunshine, if there was no comfort in them, yet spread some enlargement. These things

breathed a softer breath, as nature must (though it be unfelt) on young imaginations fluttering, like a wisp of brambled wool, in the bridle-paths and stray sheep-walks of human trouble.

CHAPTER XVI.

LITTLE BILLY.

WHEN he has refreshed his memory with the map of England, let any man point out upon it, if he can deliberately, any two parishes he knows well, which he can also certify to be exactly like each other in the character of their inhabitants. Do they ever take alike a startling piece of news about their most important people? Do they weigh in the same balance the discourses of the parson, the merits of those in authority, or the endeavours of the rich to help them? If a stranger rides along the street, he is pretty sure to be stared at; but not with quite the same expression as in the last village he came through. Each place has its own style and tone, vein of sentiment and lines of attitude, deepened perhaps by the lore and store of many generations.

For instance, Perlycombe, Perlycross, and Perliton, are but as three pearls on one string, all in a line and contiguous. The string is the stream which, arising at the eastern extremity of Perlycombe parish, passes through the village, then westward through Perlycross, and westward still through the much larger village of Perliton. At Perlycombe it is a noisy little brook, at Perlycross a genial trout-stream, anon of glassy wanderings, anon of flickered hurry; while Perliton, by the time it gets there, entitles it "the River Perle," and keeps two boats upon it, which are not always more aground than landsmen should desire.

Now any one would fancy that these three adjoining parishes would, in all their ways and manners, be as like each other as three peas verte-

brated in one pod. But the fancy would prove that he was only fit for fiction, not for the clearer heights of history such as this. For these three parishes are quite as distinct one from another, as all three taken together admit that they are, and deserve to be, from the rest of England.

All three are simple, all old-fashioned, highly respectable, and wonderfully quiet,—except when lashed up by some outrage—slightly contemptuous of one another, and decidedly so of the world outside the valley. From it they differ widely, and from one another visibly, in their facial expression, and figure, and walk; perceptibly, also, in tone of feeling, habits of thought (when they think at all), voices, pet words, and declivities of slouch. So that in these liberal times of free disintegration, each of them has nature's right to be a separate nation. And in proof of this, they beat their bounds, and often break each other's heads, upon Saint Clement's day.

"What an extraordinary sound I hear!" said Christie to her brother, as they turned to quit the hill. "Just listen a moment. I can't make it out. It sounds like a frightful lot of people in the distance."

"Well, I declare, I had forgotten all about it! How very stupid I am getting now!" cried Jemmy. "Why, this is St. Clement's day, and no mistake!"

"Who is he? I never heard of him. And what right has he got to make such a dreadful noise? He couldn't do it all by himself, Jemmy, even if he was on a gridiron."

"But he has got half of Perlycross to help him. Come here, Chris. Here is a nice dry hollow, away from the damp and the mist; and the noise below follows the curve of it."

Fox led his sister into a little scarp of flint, with brows of grey heather and russet fern quivering to the swell of funneled uproar. "Don't be

afraid," he said ; " it is only our own parish. There ought to be three of them ; but this is only ours."

" Well, if your parish can make all that noise, what would all three of them do together ? Why ten packs of hounds couldn't equal it !"

" You have hit the very point ; you have a knack of doing that," answered Jemmy, as he landed her upon a grey ledge. " We don't let the other two in any more. The business had always been triennial ; but the fighting grew more and more serious, till the stock of sticking-plaster could not stand it. Then a man of peaceful genius suggested that each parish should keep its own St. Clement's day, at intervals of three years as before ; but in succession, instead of all three at once, so that no two could meet upon the frontier in force. A sad falling off in the spirit of the thing, and threatening to be better for the lawyers than for us. Perlycombe had their time last year ; and now Perlycross has to redress it. Our eastern boundary is down in that hollow ; and Perlycombe stole forty feet from us last year. We are naturally making a little stir about it."

" If that is a little stir, what would be a big one ? But I want to see them ; and the fogginess of the trees in that direction stops me. I should say there must be at least five hundred people there. I can't stop up here like a dummy."

" Very well, if you love a row so much. But there are no five hundred there, because it is more than thirty miles round this parish, and the beaters start in two companies from Perle Weir, one lot to the north and the other to the south, and they go round till they meet each other somewhere at the back of Beacon Hill. One churchwarden with each party, and the overseers divided, and the constables, and so on. The parson should be in the thickest of the fray ; but I strictly forbade Mr. Penniloe, and told him to send Jakes as his deputy. Still I should not be surprised if he

turns up. He is hot upon the rights of his parish. Come round this way ; there is no fear of missing them, any more than a pack of hounds in full cry."

Christie was quite up for it. She loved a bit of a skirmish, and thought it might fetch her brother's spirits up again. So they turned the steep declivity, and after many scratches, crept along a tangled path, leading down to a wooded gully. Here they found themselves, rather short of breath, but in a position to command fair view of the crowd, full of action in the dingle and the bramble-land. How could it matter to any sane humanity whether the parish-bound ran even half a league on this side or on that of such a desert wild, only those who dwell on human nature can explain.

However, so it was ; and even Mr. Penniloe had flouted the doctors, and was here, clad in full academicals according to the ancient rule, flourishing his black-varnished stick, and full of unfeigned wrath at some gross crime. " Thou shalt not move thy neighbour's landmark," he was shouting, instead of swallowing pills ; and as many of his flock as heard his text smote right and left in accordance with it.

" What on earth is it all about ?" asked Christie, peeping through a holly bush, and flushing with excitement.

" All about that stone down in the hollow, where the water spurts so. Don't be afraid ; they can't see us." The girl looked again, and wondered.

Some fifty yards before them was a sparkling little watercourse, elbowing its way in hurried zigzag down the steep ; but where it landed in the fern-bed with a toss of tresses, some ungodly power of men had heaved across its silver foot a hugeous boulder of the hill, rugged, bulky, beetle-browed, the " shameless stone" of Homer. And with such effect that the rushing water, like a scared horse, leaped aside, and swerving far at the wrongful impulse cut a felonious cantel

out of the sacred parish of Perlycross. Even this was not enough. To add insult to injury, some heartless wag had chiselled on the lichened slab of boulder a human profile in broad grin, out of whose wicked mouth came a scroll, inscribed in deep letters, "P. combe Parish."

The Perlycrossians stood before this incredible sight dumb founded. Thus far they had footed it in a light and merry mood, laughing, chaffing, blowing horns, and rattling bladders, thumping trees and gates and cowsheds, bumping schoolboys against big posts, and daubing every corner of contention, from kettles of tar or sheep-wash, with a big P. +. But now as this outrage burst upon them, through a tall sheaf of yellow flags, their indignation knew no bounds, parochial or human. As soon as they could believe their eyes, they lifted their hands, and closed their lips; while the boys, who were present in great force,—for Jakes could not help the holiday—put their fingers in their mouths, and winked at one another. Five or six otter-hounds, from the kennels of a sporting yeoman, had joined the procession with much goodwill; but now they recognised the check, and sat upon their haunches, and set up a yell with one accord, in the dismay of human silence.

Not an oath was uttered, nor a ribald laugh; but presently all eyes were turned upon the pale Mr. Penniloe, who stood at the side of Mr. Farrant, the junior churchwarden, who had brought him in his four-wheeled chaise so far as wheels might venture. Few were more pained by this crime than the parson; he nodded under his college cap and said, "My friends, abate this nuisance." But this was easier said than done, as they very soon discovered. Some called for crowbars, and some for gunpowder, and some for a team of horses; but nothing of the sort was near at hand. Then Sergeant Jakes, as an old campaigner, came to the rescue, and borrowing a

hatchet (of which there were plenty among them), cut down a sapling oak, hard and tough and gnarled from want of nourishment; therewith at the obnoxious rock they rushed, butting, ramming, tugging, levering, with the big pole below and a lot of smaller staves above, and men of every size and shape trampling, and kicking out, and exhorting one another. But the boulder had been fanged into its socket so exactly, probably more by luck than skill, and there it stuck, like a gigantic molar, and Perlycross laboured in vain at it.

"What muffs! As if they could do it like that! Penniloe ought to know better; why the pressure is all the wrong way. But of course he is an Oxford man. Chris, you stay here till I come back. Cambridge v. Oxford, any day, when it comes to a question of engineering."

Speaking too lightly, he leaped in like manner into the yellow-ribbed breast of the steep; while Christie communed with herself, like this: "Oh, what a pity he left St. John's! He must have been senior-wrangler if he had stayed on, instead of those horrible hospitals. And people would have thought so much more of him. But perhaps he would not have looked so bright; and he does more good in this line, though nobody seems to thank him much. It would be ever so much better for him, and he would be valued more, if he did ever so much less good. But I like the look of Mr. Penniloe."

The man who should have been senior-wrangler (as every man ever yet sent to Cambridge should have been, if justice had been done him) went in a style of the purest mathematics along the conic sections of the very noble Hagdon. The people in the gully shouted to him, for a single slip would have brought him down upon their hats; but he kept his breath for the benefit of his legs, and his nerves were as sound as an oyster's before its pearly tears begin. Christie watched him without fear;

she had known the construction of his legs from the days of balusters and rocking-horses.

"Give me up a good pole—not too heavy—you see how I have got to throw my weight; but a bit of good stuff with an elbow to it."

Thus spake Jemmy, and the others did their best. He stuck his heel and foot-side into a soft place he had found, and let the ledge of harder stuff overlap his boot-vamps, then he took the springy spar of ash which some one had handed up to him, for he stood about twelve feet above them, and getting good purchase against a scrag of flint, brought the convexity of his pole to bear on the topmost jag of boulder. "Slew away as high as you can reach," he cried; "but don't touch it anywhere near the bottom." As they all put their weights to it, the rock began to sway, and with a heavy groan lurched sideways. "Stand clear!" cried Jemmy, as the whole bulk swung, with the pillar of water helping it, and then settled grandly back into the other niche, with the volume of the fall leaping generously into the parish of Perlycombe.

"Hurrah!" shouted everybody young enough to shout; while the elder men leant upon their staves, and thanked the Lord. Not less than forty feet was recovered, and another forty added from the substance of big rogues. "'Tis the finest thing done ever since I were a boy," said the oldest man present, as he wiped his dripping face. "Measter Vox, come down, and shake hands round. Us will never believe any harm of thee no more."

This reasoning was rather of the heart than head; but it held good all round, as it generally does. And now as the sound of the water went away into its proper course, with the joy of the just pursuing it, Miss Fox, who had watched all proceedings from the ridge, could hear how the current of public opinion was diverted and rushing in her brother's favour. So

she pinned up a torn skirt, and smoothed out another, and putting back her bright hair, tripped down the wooded slope, and stood with a charming blush before them. The labourers touched their hats, and the farmers lifted theirs, and every one tried to look his best; for Perlycross being a poetical parish is always very wide awake to beauty.

"My sister," explained Dr. Fox with just pride. "My sister, Mr. Penniloe. My sister, Mr. Farrant. Sergeant Jakes, my sister. Miss Christie Fox will be glad to know you all."

"And I am sure that everybody will be glad to know Miss Fox," said the parson, coming forward with his soft sweet smile. "At any time she would be welcome; but now she is come at the time of all times. Behold what your brother has done, Miss Fox! That stream is the parish boundary."

"He maketh the rivers to run in dry places," cried Channing the clerk, who had been pulling at his keg, "and lo, he hath taken away the reproach of His people, Israel!"

"Mr. Channing! Fie, Mr. Channing!" began the representative of the upper desk, and then suddenly checked himself, lest he should put the old man to shame before the children of the parish.

"By the by," said Mr. Farrant, coming in to fill the pause; "Dr. Fox is the likeliest person to tell us what this curious implement is. It looks like a surgical instrument of some sort. We found it, Doctor, in this same water-course, about a furlong further down where the Blackmarsh lane goes through it. We were putting our parish-mark on the old tree that overhangs a deep hole, when this young gent, who is uncommon spry (I wish you luck of him, I'm sure, Mr. Penniloe) there he spies it, and in he goes like an otter, and out with it, before he could get wet, almost."

"Not likely I was going to leave it there," young Peckover interrupted.

"I thought it was a clot of eels, or a pair of gloves, or something. Though of course a glove would float, when you come to think of it. Perhaps the young lady knows—she looks so clever."

"Hopper, no cheek!" Dr. Fox spoke sharply, for the youth was staring at his sister. "Mr. Farrant, I can't tell you what it is, for I never saw a surgical instrument like it. I should say it was more like a blacksmith's, or perhaps a turner's tool; though not at all a common one in either business. Is Crang here, or one of his apprentices?"

"No, sir. Joe is at home to-day—got a heavy job," answered someone in the crowd; "and the two apprentices be gone with t'other lot of us."

"I'll tell you what I'll do," volunteered the Hopper, who was fuming at the slowness of parochial demarcation, for he would have been at the back of Beacon Hill by this time; "I'll go straight with it to Susscot, and be back again before these old codgers have done a brace of meadows. It is frightful cold work to stand about like this. I found it, and I'll find out what it is, too."

The tool was handed to him, and he set off like a chamois in a straight line westward; while two or three farmers, who had suffered already from his steeplechase tracks, would have sent a brief word after him but for the parson's presence. Fox, who was amused with this specimen of his county, ran part of the way up the hill to watch his course, and then beckoned to his sister to return to the Old Barn by the footpath along the foot of Hagdon.

They had scarcely finished dinner, which they had to take in haste, by reason of the shortness of the days and their intended visit to Walderscourt, when Joe Crang the blacksmith appeared in the yard, pulling his hat off, and putting it on again, and wiping his face with a tongs-swab.

Fox saw that the man was in a

state of much excitement, and made him come in, while Miss Christie went up stairs to prepare for their drive to Walderscourt. "What's the matter, Crang? Take a chair there. You needn't be nervous," said the doctor kindly; "I have no grudge against you for saying what you believe. It has done me a world of harm, no doubt; but it's no fault of yours. It's only my bad luck, that some fellow very like me, and also a Jemmy, should have been in that black job that night. But I wish you had just shown a little more pluck, as I told you the other day. If you had just gone round the horse and looked, or even sung out, 'Is that you, doctor?' why you might have saved me from,—from knowing so much about my friends."

"Oh sir, 'twas an awesome night! But what I be come for to say, sir, is just this. I absolve 'e, sir; I absolve 'e, Measter Vox. If that be the right word,—and a' cometh from the Baible,—I absolve 'e, Measter Vox."

"Absolve me from what, Crang? I have done nothing. You mean, I suppose, that you acquit me?"

"Well, now, you would never believe,—but that's the very word of discourse that have been sticking in my throat all the way from the ford. You never done it, sir, not you. You never done it, sir! You may put me on my oath."

"But you have been very much upon your oath ever since it happened, that I was the man, and no other man, that did the whole of it, Joseph Crang. And the ale you have had on the strength of it!"

"The ale, sir, is neither here nor there,"—the blacksmith looked hurt by this imputation. "It cometh to-day, and it goeth to-morrow, the same as the flowers of the field. But the truth is the thing as abideth, Measter Jemmy. Not but what the ale might come, upon the other view of it; likewise, likewise—if the Lord in heaven ordereth it, the same as the quails from the sky, sir."

"The miracle would be if it failed to come wherever you are, Joseph. But what has converted you from glasses against me, to glasses in my favour?"

"Nothing more than this, sir. Seemeth to a loose mind neither here nor there; but to them that knoweth it, beyond when human mind began, perhaps afore the flood waz, there's nought that speaks like Little Billy."

"Why this," exclaimed Fox, as he unrolled the last new leathern apron of the firm of Crang and wife, "this is the thing they found to-day in beating the bounds of the parish. Nobody could make out what it was. What can it have to do with me, or the sad affair at Perlycross?"

"Little Billy, sir," replied the blacksmith, dandling the tool with honest love, as he promptly recovered it from Fox, "have been in our family from father to son, since time runneth not to the contrary. Half her can do is unbeknown to me, not having the brains as used to be. Ah, we was clever people then, afore the times of the New Covenant. It runneth in our race that there was a Joe Crang did the crafty work for the Tabernacle as was set up in the wilderness. And it might a' been him as made Little Billy."

"Very hard indeed to prove; harder still to disprove. But giving you the benefit of the doubt, Master Crang, how have you used this magic tool yourself?"

"That's where the very pint of the whole thing lies; that's what shows them up so ungrateful, sir. Not a soul in the parish to remember what Little Billy hath been to them! Mind, I don't say as I understand this tool, though I does a'most anything with her. But for them not to know! For them to send to ax the name of 'un, when there bain't one in ten of 'em as bathn't roared over 'un, when her was screwed to a big beck tooth."

"The ungrateful villains! It is really too bad. So after all, it proves to be what Mr. Farrant thought it

was,—a genuine surgical instrument. But go on, Crang; will you never tell me how this amounts to any proof, either of my guilt or innocence?"

"Why, according of this here, sir, and no way out of it. Little Billy were took off my shelf, where her always bideth from father to son, by the big man as come along of the lame horse and the cart that night. When I was a-kneeling down, I zeed 'un put his hand to it, though I dussn't say a word for the life of me. And he slipped 'un into his pocket, same as he would a penny dolly."

"Come, now, that does seem more important," said the doctor cogitating. "But what could the fellow have wanted it for?"

"Can't tell 'e, sir," replied the blacksmith. "For some of his un-Christian work, maybe; or he might have thought it would come in handy, if aught should go amiss with the poor nag again. Many's the shoe I've punched off with Little Billy."

"A Billy of all trades it seems to be. But how does the recovery of this tool show that you made a mistake about me, Crang?"

"By reason of the place where her was cast away. You can't get from Old Barn to Blackmarsh Lane with wheels, sir, any way, can you? You know how that is, Doctor Jemmy."

"Certainly I do. But that proves nothing to my mind at all conclusive."

"To my mind it do prove everything collusive. And here be the sign and seal of it. As long as I spoke again' you, Dr. Vox, I was forced to go without my Little Billy. Not a day's work hath prospered all that time, and two bad shillings from chaps as rode away. But now I be took to the right side again, here comes my Little Billy, and an order for three harries!"

"But it was the Little Billy that has made you change sides. It came before, and not in consequence of that."

"And glad I be to see 'un, sir, and glad to find you clear of it. Tell 'e

what I'll do, Doctor Jemmy. You draw a table up as big as Ten Commandments, and three horse-shoes on the top for luck, in the name of the Lord and King William the Fourth, and we'll have it on church-door by next Sunday, with my mark on it, and both 'prentices'. You put it up, sir, like Nebuchadnezzar; beginning, 'I Joseph Crang, do hereby confess, confirm, and convince all honest folk of this here parish——'

"No, no; nothing of that, Joe. I am quite satisfied. Let people come

round, or not, just as they like. I am having a holiday, and I find it very pleasant."

"Meaning to say as it have spoiled your trade? Never would I forgive a man as did the like to me. But I see you be going for a trip somewhere, sir, with a pretty lady. Only you mind one thing. Joe Crang will shoe your horses, as long as you bide in Perlycrass, for the wholesale price of the iron, Doctor Jemmy; time, and labour, and nails thrown in, free, gratis, and for nothing."

(To be continued.)

THE LETTERS OF HENRY THE FOURTH.

HENRY THE FOURTH of France is perhaps the most remarkable instance of a man who has achieved a great literary reputation without in the least intending it. A fighter and a statesman from his youth upwards, at no time given to books or caring for literature other than as a national possession, he is yet recognised by the nation of modern Europe which shows the least tolerance for amateurs as one of the greater lights of her literary firmament. In fine he ranks as a letter-writer second only to Madame de Sévigné. But between the methods of these two masters of the art what a contrast! While the cultivated woman of leisure made it part of her day's work to spend an hour or two at her writing-table, pouring forth charming and enlightened gossip, Henry's letters are momentary episodes snatched from the hurry and turmoil of constant warfare, or in later life from the business of governing a great empire. Hence many of them are mere notes, dealing almost exclusively with the matter in hand, giving sometimes an order, sometimes encouragement or sympathy, but seldom news. His fullest letters are those to the Comtesse de Gramont, *la belle Corisande*; but even to her you feel that he is writing, so to speak, with one foot in the stirrup. How is it then that so rapid and careless a writer has gained so great a reputation? What is the secret of his success?

In the first place he had by nature the gift of style. It was a style such as Montaigne loved: "A simple and natural speech, such upon the paper as it is in the mouth; a speech full of sap and sinew, curt and compressed; not laboured and polished so much as vehement and brusque; not pedant-like, not monk-like, not lawyer-like, but rather soldier-like, as Suetonius

calls that of Julius Cæsar." In an age in which the besetting sin of prose writers, of Montaigne himself no less than of the least literary of the numerous gentlemen who have given their memoirs to posterity, was longwindedness and obscurity, Henry was remarkable in using short simple sentences. When his grandmother, Margaret of Angoulême, who, as we know from the *Heptameron*, was a graceful and, for her time, an admirable writer, wrote to Bishop Briçonnet, or the Constable Montmorency, she apparently thought it a mark of respect to her correspondents to lose herself in a maze of intricate and involved phraseology, and to avoid before all things saying a plain thing in a plain way. Epistolary style had improved a good deal in France since Margaret's day, and Henry's contemporaries, Etienne Pasquier and Du Plessis Mornay, rank high among the prose writers of their time. Pasquier especially wrote simply and delightfully, but he was, so to speak, a professional letter-writer, writing, like Pliny, avowedly with a view to publication. Nor indeed, though he is a more correct writer than the King, can he compare with him in the higher and rarer qualities of style.

Henry's rapid, direct way of writing was, no doubt, partly the natural expression of his own character, but partly it was created by force of circumstances. A man who has to dash off his letters between saddle and supper has no time to weave long periods or to enter on his subject by winding approaches; he must say what he has to say in the fewest possible terms, plainly and to the point. There is not much in common between Henry and Calvin, either as men or writers, but their style has two significant points of resemblance. In the first

place, Calvin's style, like Henry's, was in great measure determined by circumstances; his object was to convince, and therefore above all things he had to be clear and logical. Secondly, of both the saying is eminently true, that the style is the man. In Calvin's you see the hard, unimaginative, logical, strong and wholly sincere man. Henry's is equally a mirror of his character; it not only reflects his rapidity of movement and thought, but it shows his power of grasping the central point of a situation. He has in an eminent degree the knack of hitting upon the best word, the word which most accurately and vividly expresses the thought; and this art, which is one of the secrets of style, and which Flaubert acquired by long and painful labour, he had by the royal gift of nature. It was part of his astonishing clearness of perception, his power of seeing facts as they are, his innate realism, as it would be called in these days. Besides this, his imagination, if of no great depth, was easily moved; he had something of the poet's eye and of the poet's feeling. Hence the frequent use of picturesque words and expressions which give a racy but untranslatable flavour to his more intimate letters. The same lively imagination too, united with the suppleness of mind and character which was partly natural to him, but which had been greatly developed by the perplexing difficulties of his career, made him at once a consummate judge of other men's characters, and a master in one of the rarest arts of letter-writing, that of varying his tone with his correspondent. Thus to his companions-in-arms he is brusque and soldier-like, at once their comrade and their commander; to his mistresses he is the ardent and devoted lover, with a halo of romance round his head; to Henry the Third he is the loyal and respectful subject even when he is fighting against him. And to all alike he writes with a warmth of feeling that must have roused a corresponding glow

in their hearts, even if they felt sometimes that behind the Gascon's frank and affectionate *bonhomie* there lay a clear perception of his own needs and of the means by which they could best be satisfied. Finally, he had the indispensable quality of a successful letter-writer, that of writing to his friends as if he were talking to them.

His letters have been published in nine thick quarto volumes in the series of the *Documents Inédits*, but this publication, which is by no means complete, naturally includes a large number of official letters of which the actual composition was the work of his secretaries. To enable readers to judge of his true epistolary style, M. Dussieux published in 1876 a sufficiently ample selection from the first eight volumes, consisting mainly of private letters (*Lettres Intimes de Henri IV.*). More recently his letters to his mistresses have appeared under the auspices of M. Lescure (*Lettres d'Amour de Henri IV.*), but as they give but one, and that, in some respects, the least pleasant side of his character, M. Dussieux's publication is far the more serviceable one. It may be noticed that Henry wrote a bold and fairly legible hand, with a good deal of character about it. He is fond of making huge loops to his letters, and as he uses the letter *y* in place of *i* even more freely than was usual in the sixteenth century, he has plenty of opportunity for indulging in this propensity. His spelling is extremely variable, as was the practice in that day, and shows the same large tolerance which characterised him in more important matters.

As I have said, his fullest letters are those to the Comtesse de Gramont; they are also among his best. Of his various mistresses she was by far the worthiest, and the most his equal in mind and force of character; she assisted his plans, not only with counsel and sympathy, but by raising troops at her own expense. Naturally, therefore, he makes her the confidant of his intentions, and gives her hurried

but graphic accounts of his exploits. The correspondence, as we have it, begins in December, 1585, when his fortunes, and that of the Huguenot cause generally, were apparently at a very low ebb. It is true that the death of the Duke of Alençon in June, 1584, an event, as Ranke caustically observes, of much more importance than his life had ever been, had brought Henry of Navarre into a position which when he lay in his great tortoise-shell at Pau he did not seem to have the slightest prospect of ever filling, that of next in succession to the throne of France; but this very event had caused the re-organisation of the League in a more effective shape, followed by a fresh attack upon the Huguenots. In July, 1585, the King, under the influence of Henry of Guise, had issued an edict against them, the so-called Edict of Nemours, unprecedented in its severity; and in September Pope Sixtus the Fifth, acting under the same influence, excommunicated Henry of Navarre. This last weapon however fell quite harmless, and the Pope was soon afterwards moved to genuine admiration by seeing all over Rome placards signed by Navarre, which stated that "touching the crime of heresy, of which he is falsely accused, M. Sixte, who calls himself Pope (with all respect to His Holiness), has falsely and maliciously lied, and he himself is a heretic." In October the King put forth a new edict of even greater severity, the immediate result of which was that a large number of Huguenots fled from France, and about the same time the eighth Civil War began. It was in the summer of 1585, during the desultory operations which characterised the beginning of this war, that Henry wrote to Corisande the letter containing the celebrated description of the island of Marans near La Rochelle:

I arrived last night from Marans, where I had gone to provide for its safety. Oh! how I wished you were there; it's the place the most after your heart I have ever seen. For this reason, and for no

other, I am acquiring it by exchange. It is an island enclosed by wooded marshes, where, at every hundred paces, there are canals for the transport of the wood by boat. The water is clear, almost stagnant; the canals of every breadth, the boats of all sizes. Among these deserts are a thousand gardens, which can only be reached by boat. The island is two leagues round, enclosed in the way I have told you; a river runs at the foot of the castle, which lies in the middle of the town, and is as habitable as Pau. There are few houses which have not a door leading to their own boat. The river divides into two arms, big enough not only for large boats, but for vessels of fifty tons. It's only two leagues to the sea. As a matter of fact, it is a canal, not a river. Up stream the large boats go as far as Niort, distant twelve leagues. There are countless mills and solitary farms; all sorts of singing-birds and sea-birds: I send you some feathers. The fish are a marvel for quantity, size, and price; a large carp three sous, a pike five. It's a place of great traffic, all by boats. The land is full of wheat, very fine. It's a country to dwell in with pleasure in peace and with safety in war; to enjoy one's self with the object of one's affections, and to regret her absence. Oh! how good it is to sing there.

Less than two years after this Corisande began to show signs of resentment at her lover's inconstancy. She wrote to him that she could have no confidence in anything so changeable. And in spite of his repeated protestations of fidelity the rift went on continually widening. A letter, dated May, 1589, has been enriched by her with a running commentary of no very friendly nature. "I swear," writes Henry, "that I love and honour no one in the world like you." "There is no appearance of it," is the comment. "I will show my fidelity to you until the grave." Corisande, after altering the word "fidelity" to "infidelity," added, "I believe it." In July he swears that he loves her more than ever. The same protestations are continued throughout the winter. In the following May he writes, "I love you more than you do me." A fortnight later he is sending an impatient summons to surrender to the Comtesse

de la Roche-Guyon, whom he is also prepared to "adore until the grave." In July, however, he is still able to assure Corisande that he loves her better than anything in the world: "A thing of which I am certain you will never have any doubts; and upon this truth, my soul, I kiss a million times those beautiful eyes which I shall hold all my life dearer than anything in the world." Meanwhile Madame de la Roche-Guyon, greatly to his surprise, judging from the free and easy tone of his letter to her, had declined his offers of undying affection, and on the last day of August he writes to her in a very different tone:

My mistress,¹ I write to you these lines on the eve of a battle. The issue is in the hands of God, who hath already ordained what shall come of it, for the glory and safety of my people. If I lose it, you will never see me again, for I am not a man to fly or retreat. But I can promise you that if I fall, my last thought but one shall be of you, my last of God, to whom I commend you and myself.

The battle which Henry anticipated did not take place, for his opponent, the Duke of Parma, declined to fight, and Madame de la Roche-Guyon remained a virtuous woman. In the following November the King saw and fell headlong in love with the fair, foolish face of Gabrielle d'Estrées, a fact which did not prevent him from writing once more to Corisande in terms of warm affection. It is Gabrielle d'Estrées whose name is most closely associated in popular imagination with that of the *Veri Galant*. A woman of no education, little mind, and less than easy virtue, she must have been gifted in an unusual manner with tact and temper, for she not only retained her lover's affections until her death, but, what was a more difficult matter, held her highly equivocal and difficult position, namely, that of

a queen in all but name, almost without making an enemy. There is little in the King's letters to her except protestations of affection, but one of them is so happy that it may be quoted in entirety:

I write to you, my dear love, at the foot of your picture, which I adore only because it is meant for you, not because it is like you. I am a competent judge, as I have a painting of you in all perfection in my soul, in my heart, in my eyes.

It must be confessed that the portraits of Gabrielle at Chénouceaux, which are numerous, do not give one the idea of a very beautiful woman. The face is far too insipid.

Another letter is notable as containing an often-quoted passage: "It is on Sunday," he says, referring to his intention to hear mass at Saint Denis, and so publicly proclaim his change of religion, "that I take the perilous leap." The phrase, like Lord Derby's "leap in the dark," has been quoted as a sign of the King's levity in this important matter. This is not the place to justify his action, but of one thing we may be certain, that it was not taken without the fullest consideration and the deepest sense of the issues, religious as well as political, which it involved. Moreover those who think the words *le saut périlleux* are unbecomingly the gravity of the occasion should read the two letters which the King wrote on that memorable Sunday after the leap was accomplished, one to "certain gentlemen of the Religion," and the other to the towns of the League, in which, in weighty and dignified language, he gives his reasons for the step he had taken.

Another letter contains the well-known verses beginning, "Charmante Gabrielle." They have been attributed to the court-poet Jean Bertaut, but this is pure conjecture, and there is no reason to doubt Henry's express statement about them, — "*Je les ai dictés mais non arrangées*," which certainly means, "I composed

¹ It may be as well to point out that, at this time, the word "mistress" did not, either in French or English, bear its modern signification.

them but did not arrange them for music." As a matter of fact, the music, which became very popular, was composed as a Nowell in the reign of Charles the Ninth, and probably the refrain at the end of each verse, "*Cruelle départie*," &c., formed part of the original words for which the music was written; no doubt also some of the stanzas have been added in later times.

In spite of the vehement and well-grounded opposition of Sully and other faithful counsellors, the King was bent upon obtaining a divorce from Margaret of Valois and marrying Gabrielle, but his intentions were cut short by her death, not without suspicion of poison, in April, 1599. Henry, like other widowers (if one may apply the term to him) of his amorous temperament, was inconsolable, and like them was speedily consoled. "The root of my love is dead, it will put forth no new shoots," he writes to his sister Catherine. But before the summer was over that hardy and vigorous plant, which he had given over for dead, had again shot up, and a successor to Gabrielle had been found in Henriette d'Entragues, whom he created Marquise de Verneuil. But in his ignoble relations with this lady, a superior sort of Madame Marneffe, we need not follow him. Truth to say, the good King in his later love affairs reminds one forcibly of another character of Balzac, the most illustrious of Madame Marneffe's victims, Baron Hulot d'Ervy.

It is pleasanter to turn to his letters to his comrades-in-arms. He writes to him in a tone of easy familiarity and warm-hearted friendship; for many he has queer nicknames; M. de Batz is *my Reaper*, M. de Harambure, who had been his companion from childhood, and who had lost an eye in battle, is *Borgne* (the one-eyed man), M. de Lestelle is *Frog*. But in spite of this familiar tone, he knew how to make himself obeyed, and in a letter to the last-named, who was a gentleman of his chamber, he

rates him severely for having disobeyed the orders of his superior in command. It was indeed no easy task for Henry, while he was still only King of Navarre, to keep his followers in a state of discipline; many of them owed him no allegiance except that which was due to the leader under whom they had elected to serve; many were fighting more for their own hand than for the Huguenot cause; and nearly all were jealous of one another. It was Henry's part at once to coax, to command, and to encourage. "Your kind master, and your best friend," is his favourite style for ending his letters, and it aptly expresses the mixed relation in which he stood to his supporters. Nor must it be forgotten that not a few of them were Catholics, between whom and his Protestant followers not a little ill-feeling was constantly simmering. For in those days there were not more than a handful of genuinely tolerant men in the kingdom, and two of these were Montaigne and the King of Navarre.

Among the King's Catholic followers was M. de Batz, who was often attacked by the Protestants. "It is true," writes Henry to him, "that a great scoundrel has tried to make me suspect your fidelity and affection; but though my ears are open to whatever I ought to hear, against him my heart and my mind are shut. And don't you heed it any more than I do." To the same man he wrote two characteristic letters during the campaign of 1586, when he was surrounded at Nerac by the troops of the League. The second is so short that it may be given complete: "My Reaper, put wings on your best animal: I have told Montespán to ride his to death. Why? I will tell you at Nerac. Hasten, hurry, come, fly; 'tis the order of your master and the prayer of your friend."

An even shorter missive is one addressed to M. de Fervaques, just before the battle of Ivry: "Fervaques, to horse, for I want to see in this

battle of what breed are the Norman geese. Come straight to Alençon. HENRY." In the evening after the battle he wrote a brief note announcing his victory to the Marquis de Curton (who, by a strange coincidence, was writing at the very same moment to the King to tell him of a victory gained by himself), and a somewhat longer account to the Duc de Longueville, the beginning of which is worth quoting :

My cousin, we have to praise God ; He has given us a great victory. The battle was fought ; the day hung in the balance ; God determined it according to His equity : all the enemy's troops in retreat, the infantry, both foreign and French prisoners ; the Reiters for the most part defeated, the Burgundians scattered, the white ensign and the artillery captured, the pursuit up to the gates of Mantes.

The following letter was written to M. de Harambure during the King's long siege of Amiens in 1597 :

Borgne, I was rejoiced to hear that you had arrived at Paris. Make haste if you wish to take part in the battle, for the enemy is marching straight on us. I am just starting on horseback to reconnoitre. Push on, if you love me ; and if there are any more where you are, hurry them on. God be with you. Friday morning, six o'clock, in the camp before Amiens, August 29th.

Needless to say, the one-eyed soldier arrived in time to share in the fray, which took place on the day following Henry's letter, and which resulted in the rout of a thousand Spanish horse by two hundred and fifty of his light cavalry.

On September 15th the Spaniards and their allies were defeated in a general engagement, and on the 19th the garrison of Amiens capitulated, whereupon the King wrote to Crillon, or Grillon as he always spells it, who had not been present at the battle, as follows :

Brave Grillon, hang yourself for not having been here by my side last Monday for the best engagement that was ever seen, or perhaps ever will be. Believe me, I

greatly longed for you. The Cardinal paid us a visit in a most furious fashion, but went away again in a most ignominious one. I hope next Thursday to be in Amiens, but I shall not stay, as I intend a fresh enterprise, for I have now one of the finest armies imaginable. It lacks nothing but brave Grillon, who will always find from me a warm welcome.

This letter is well known from Voltaire's misquotation of it : " Hang thyself, brave Grillon, we fought at Arques, and you were not there. God be with you, brave Grillon. I love you blindly."

Henry excelled in writing sympathetic letters to his followers when they were laid up by a wound or illness. What can be more charming than the following to M. de Saint-Geniez, his lieutenant-general for Navarre ?

I have been much grieved to hear of your illness by the bearer of this letter, and I beg you, for love of me, not to exert yourself to come here ; for I should be too sorry to be the cause either of aggravating your complaint or retarding your recovery. But I quite intend to come and see you myself, and help your return to health ; and, with God's help, I shall be at Navarreins on Tuesday evening, so as to dine with you on Wednesday, bringing with me two or three only of our good friends. Meanwhile rest yourself, that I may find you in good case. I will pray God, M. de Saint-Geniez, to have you in His holy keeping. Pau, the 14th of January, evening, 1583. Your very affectionate master and firm friend, HENRY.

So also in that difficult task of condoling with his friends for the loss of their best and dearest, he showed equal tact and sympathy. Witness the touching letter, too long unfortunately to quote in full and too perfect to mutilate, which he wrote to the young widow of the Comte de Laval, a Coligny and nephew of the great Admiral, who was killed at Taillebourg with one of his brothers, while the third died of his wounds a few days afterwards. It concludes thus.—" I know, my cousin, that you have lost much, and so have we ; at least his

friends are left to you, among whom count always on me for your most affectionate cousin and best friend, HENRY."

Equal consideration is shown in the letter which he sat down to write to Madame de Batz, immediately after the battle of Cahors, to assure her of her husband's safety :

I will not change my clothes, covered though I am with blood and powder, without giving you good news, and news of your husband, who is quite safe and sound. Captain Noailles, whom I am sending to you, will tell you in detail how we had the better of those wretches of Cahors. Your husband never left my side a halberd's length. And God led us by the hand on the good, narrow road of safety, for many of our men, whom I greatly regret, fell beside us.

How could a man who wrote like this to his partisans and their wives fail to win hearts as well as cities? But the masterstroke of his tact is perhaps the concluding sentence of a letter to M. de Launay, in which he asks for a loan of money : "I don't know when, or how, if ever, I can repay you ; but I promise you plenty of honour and glory ; and *money is no pasturage for gentlemen like you and me.*"

We English, who are given to express ourselves more coldly than we feel, are apt to think that warmth of expression implies insincerity ; it is therefore natural to ask ourselves how far Henry was sincere in his protestations of affection and solicitude, and whether his actions squared with his words. Agrippa d'Aubigné, one of his most faithful adherents, no doubt accuses him of ingratitude ; but the old Huguenot had, under a rough skin, a sensitive soul, and held a somewhat exaggerated view of his own services. The same accusation has been freely repeated by modern writers, but there is really little to justify it, or to shew that the King of France forgot the services rendered to the King of Navarre. Mark Pattison in his life of Casaubon has laid stress

upon his treatment of Du Plessis Mornay at the Fontainebleau conference ; but three years before this although the two old friends had been somewhat estranged since the King's abjuration, Henry, having heard of a bloodthirsty attack which had been made upon Du Plessis by a powerful nobleman, had written to him as follows :

Monsieur du Plessis, I am extremely sorry for the outrage which you have received, in which I share, both as King and as your friend. As the first I will do you justice, and myself as well ; if I were nothing but the second, there would be no one whose sword would be more ready to unsheath for you than mine, nor who would give you his life more gaily.

It may be admitted, however, that to Henry, as a true Gascon, over-colouring in the matter of language came more easily than the reverse. We have seen with what fervour he protested his undying affection for the Comtesse de Gramont, and what was the value of his protestations. But the choicest specimen of gasconading that we can cull from his correspondence is a letter to Queen Elizabeth about her portrait, which she had sent to the King's sister, but which he, on a hint from Lord Sheffield, kept for himself. Considering that the Queen was over sixty at the time, it must be confessed that the gallant King here lays on the paint with a very broad brush ; indeed, if the work were less artistic, one would say, with a trowel.

In a hardly less decorative style he begins his correspondence with his future wife, Marie de Medici. In his first letter he speaks of his "invincible affection," and, after dwelling on his passionate desire to love her all his life, concludes by describing himself as "a prince whom Heaven had dedicated to her, and created for her only." The next letter must be given in full.

I have received with much pleasure news of you from Fontenac, who has made me a faithful report of your merits ; and though they were well known from other sources,

I have given more credence to his words than I should have done to those of any one else, for he knows my taste so well that I myself do not know it better. He has painted you in such terms that I love you, not only as a husband ought to love a wife, but as a passionate admirer his mistress. This is the title which I shall give you till I reach Marseilles, when you will change it for one more honourable. I shall henceforth let no opportunity go without writing to you, and assuring you that my most violent desire is to see you and have you near me. Believe me, my mistress, that each month will seem an age. I received this morning a letter from you in French; if you wrote it without assistance, you are already very proficient in the language.

Poor Marie de Medici! her temper, her dulness, and her intrigues, have given her a bad name in the country of her adoption, but, in spite of the King's fair words, surely no more ignominious position ever awaited a bride; rather by very reason of these fair words was her position aggravated. The curious thing was that Henry never seemed to see it in the same light, but was only too ready to show her all the kindness and affection in the world, provided she would not be jealous of the Marquise de Verneuil. In fact the royal household became now like that of a patriarch of old, the wife and the mistress both living in the Louvre, and their children being brought up in the same nursery.

The governess to whom was entrusted the charge of this strange and unruly troop was Madame de Montglat, and the King's letters to her are very interesting. In one he thus quaintly announces the birth of a daughter: "My wife was confined yesterday,—of what is God's pleasure. She is more vexed about it than I am." He was an affectionate and even anxious father, and these letters often contain minute directions about the children, especially when any of them has the small-pox or some other infectious illness. The death of Madame de Montglat's husband is the occasion of a sympathetic letter, in which, with

kindly good sense, he says she must not neglect his children in order to indulge her own grief. A conspicuous part in their education was played by the whip, as the following extract from one of the letters shows:

I complain of your not having sent me word that you had whipped my son; for I desire and order you to whip him every time that he is obstinate or naughty, knowing well from my own case that there is nothing in the world which does more good; I know by experience what good it did me, for, when I was his age, I was whipped a great deal.

About six months after this letter the King writes to Sully from Fontainebleau that all his children were ill there. "You may imagine whether, with all this, I am free from anxiety."

It was about two years before this that Maximilien de Béthune, Baron de Rosny, the truest friend and most loyal minister that ever served a monarch, had been created Duc de Sully. To him some of Henry's best letters are addressed, letters which amply testify to the King's high qualities both of head and heart. The following, dated February 15th, 1591, is one of the earliest in M. Dussieux's selection:

Rosny, all the news I get from Mantes says that you are worn and thin from work. If you want to take a holiday and grow fat again, you had better come here, while your brother, who will give you news of our siege, remains there. Before Chartres.

Another begins thus: "My friend, you are an ass (*une bête*)," the reason being that Sully had raised objections to the enormous sum that the King required for buying the submission of Villars-Branças and other leading Leaguers. The whole amount which was spent in this way came to thirty-two million *livres*, equal to about thirteen million pounds of English money of the present day. The result was that the French people, who had already suffered heavily from the long civil war, were ground down with taxes, and the King was at his wits'

end for money. He, however, discovered that things were much worse than they need have been, owing to the wholesale dishonesty of those who had the management of the finances. In April, 1596, therefore, he wrote a long and important letter to Sully, in which, after drawing a vivid picture of the financial distress, and of the corruption which was the cause of it, he puts into his hands the task of regeneration. The greater part of the letter, which Sully gives in his memoirs, has evidently been rewritten by him, but there is still left a good deal which, from the raciness of the language, is no doubt the King's own. "I have hardly a horse on which I can go to battle," he says, "nor a complete harness which I can put on. My shirts are all torn, my doublets in holes at the elbow, there is often nothing for dinner, and for the last two days I have been dining or supping out." Sully executed the difficult task entrusted to him with triumphant success, and in 1599 was definitely appointed superintendent of finance.

On the death of Queen Elizabeth the King writes to Sully in terms of sincere regret, for he recognised that he had lost his best political ally; there is mention in the letter of "great plans" which he had made in conjunction with the Queen, with the object of checking the excessive power of the House of Austria, but there is nothing to show that anything more was contemplated than a re-adjustment of the balance of power in Europe.

One of Sully's most troublesome tasks was to keep the peace between his master and the Queen. On one occasion, after some quarrel between them, Sully, on going to the Louvre,

found the Queen writing a letter to the King in language which was calculated to make matters worse. He remonstrated, and at her bidding drafted a new version of the letter in considerably milder terms, which was sent to Henry. It produced the following letter to Sully:

My friend, I have received a letter from my wife of the most impertinent kind, but I am not so angry with her as with the person who composed it, for I see well that it is not her style. So make inquiries and try to discover who the author is, for I will never see him nor love him more.

The King can hardly fail to have recognised Sully's style, which is unmistakable. However, on his return to Paris a few days afterwards he came to see him, and asked him if he had found out the writer. After a little fencing Sully confessed, and showed the King his original draft, when, on comparing it with the Queen's letter, it was seen that the expressions which had made the King so angry had been introduced by her.

Another old friend for whom Henry retained unbroken friendship was "the brave Grillon." The following letter, written in October, 1609, speaks for itself:

Brave Grillon, loving you as I do, I should be very glad if your health permitted you to come this way again, to see your master who loves you as you could wish to be loved, and your friends. Your nephew, who will give you this, will tell you all about me, and how fine it is here. I have charged him with messages, so I need not write you a longer letter, and will conclude by praying God to have you, brave Grillon, in His holy and worthy keeping. October 17th, Fontainebleau.

Seven months later and the writer was dead, fallen by the assassin's knife.

ARTHUR TILLEY.

DWELLERS IN ARCADY.

THERE were hills which garnished their proud heights with stately trees ; humble valleys whose base estate seemed comforted with the refreshing of silver rivers ; meadows enamelled with all sorts of eye-pleasing flowers ; thickets which, being lined with the most pleasant shade, were velused by the cheerful disposition of many well-tuned birds ; each pasture stored with sheep, feeding with sober security ; while the pretty lambs with bleating oratory craved their dams' comfort ; here a shepherd-boy piping as if we should never be old, there a young shepherdess knitting and withal singing, and it seemed that her voice comforted her hands to work, for her hands kept time to her music.

My text is from Sir Philip Sidney's "Arcadia," a country which will ever exist unspoiled, untouched, a refuge for those who seek it, whether they find it as Sidney did by Coniston Water, or whether it exists only in the dreams of some city-bound prisoner. It is always the same ; the *something beyond*, the point where spirit and where matter meet, the land brightened by heavenly alchemy, and by that personal vibration between man and nature which is the soul of immaterial things. Where that point of meeting exists is different for every one of us, and this is what each critic in turn has to try to apprehend.

Only the other day I was writing of Bewick in these pages ; Bewick who dwelled in Arcady as he strode along the busy London streets ; Bewick whose heart was in the north, far away by Tyne-side among his early haunts, listening with delight to the murmuring of the flooded burn which passed his father's house, where he would leap from bed to watch the water's varying aspects, or follow the sheep through the wreaths of snow as they sought shelter from the drifts on the fells, "under the low braes overhung with whins." No wonder he

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shook the dust from off his feet and turned his back upon the great city !

It is with another dweller in Arcady that these pages are concerned to-day, whose history has lately appeared, written by Miss Gerard and verified with great pains and much research. It is the story of Angelica Kauffmann, who sat painting in her house in Golden Square, while Bewick wearily trudged through London streets. Scarcely a dozen years lay between the two in actual age, but almost as many centuries might have divided them. From Northumberland to Ancient Greece is a long way to go, even in the spirit kingdom ; and yet as I write these words I realise that some Arcadias, such as Bewick's, belong to natural laws and are part of all time, and that others, such as Angelica's, belong to moods and phases only.

In 1796, when Bewick came to London, Angelica was already established in her house in Golden Square ; her beautiful fanciful visions lay hidden in her own warm imagination, while she dwelt among the bricks and scandals of the town. Hers was a curious position ; she was in early middle age, a wife and no wife, a struggling fine lady, a hard-working woman, living from hand to mouth. She had friends, angry lovers, admiring patrons, adorners without number, envious cruel enemies ; Hone had just wantonly assaulted her ; she was labouring for her daily bread, painting portraits and mythological and allegorical histories and compositions—Gandish himself never produced subjects more tremendous. But through it all Angelica dwelt on in Arcady, forgetting her troubles among her dislocated but gracious dreams.

What would Bewick have cared for

¹ *Angelica Kauffmann* ; by Frances A Gerard. New Edition ; London, 1893.

Angelica's waning, candle-lit world, *he* the lover of natural things, of early dawns, of nightly trappings by storm or starlight, with a heart attuned to reality? "To his utterly English mind," says Mr. Ruskin, "the straw of the sty and its tenantry were abiding truth, the cloud of Olympus and its tenantry a child's dream. He could draw a pig but not an Aphrodite. . . . I must endeavour to make you understand the magnificent artistic power, the flawless virtue, veracity, and tenderness, the infinite humour of the man, and yet the difference between England and Florence in the use they make of such gifts in their children."

Angelica was a child of Italy; tradition and conventionality had been her masters. And yet, though it may be difficult to realise, underneath all the artificiality of her work and experience, there lies hidden some touch of natural grace and truth, which has kept her memory alive to this day. Perhaps it is her personality which has outlived her performance. She made work to order, but she herself was spontaneous; the fine ladies she painted would have given much to have had her charm, her gaiety, her gracious fascination.

It was fortunate for Angelica that she belonged to a day when people were more easily themselves than they are now; when there was more ceremony, but less crowding of mind and feeling. It was also fortunate for her that she was born in a leisurely period when her dress, her graceful flowing draperies, harmonised so well with her charming self. Her very name is curiously appropriate. An angel, a trader,—do not both of them describe her?

It cannot be denied that some of her work was very bad. Only the other day, deep buried in the vaults of the National Gallery, a friend showed me a portentous canvas representing Religion surrounded by all the Virtues. It would certainly require all the attributes to enable one to forgive

such a composition; but it would be unfair to judge her by this one special production, for many delightful suggestions, decorations, compositions, exist to this day, giving pleasure still, and bearing witness to her conscientious and untiring life's work. Her loving soul carried her safely across the disappointments and disillusiones which are too apt to cloud the later hours of life. It sometimes happens that the end of a life is more interesting, more full of meaning than the beginning of it; the lights seem to grow more complexly beautiful, the feeling of it all more natural and touching; and that which people are pleased to call *illusion* often strikes more true to the heart than the driest and most incontrovertible facts. This, assuredly, was the moral of Angelica's sixty-year-long story.

The writer, who once in her own youth wrote the romance of Miss Angel, has been reading the further history (an authentic and genuine story this time) of Madam Angelica, and realising how much still remains to tell of a life of which the early morning hours are over. If the early morning was the period of work and enthusiasm, the later hours bring an added emotion and experience into play, perhaps less attractive, but more endearing than the brilliant flash of youth. If we take Angelica for what she did, it would not go very far; but if we take her for herself, her long-suffering, charming, honourable, enthusiastic self, her nature attracts us as ever through a dividing century. Nor need we be ashamed to admire where Sir Joshua Reynolds and Goethe, and so many other delightful persons, have passed before us.

Angelica's correspondence with Goethe in 1778, when she was about forty-seven years of age, is almost laughably romantic; and yet what woman might not be proud to have received such a tribute at any age. German women seem to possess a fund of innocent enduring romance; they are not bound by that restraining

sense of humour which, I suppose, keeps an Englishwoman in check; though Angelica had forgotten her German and her German spelling, and needed all the eight volumes of Goethe's works which he sent her to remind her of her native tongue, yet her heart did not forget to beat. To the very last she turned towards that Arcadia of feeling which was her heaven. Her friendship for Goethe, and for Herder too, as one reads of both in the letters selected by Miss Gerard, give a most fanciful and striking phase of a woman's history. The self-suppression of Angelica's married life had left her nature still longing for sympathy; to the end she retained her ideal; to the end she seemed unable to live alone in self-respecting independence, but ever constrained to throw herself into the hopes and lives and loves of others, to live in their lives and their welfare. "Parting from you has penetrated my heart and soul with grief," she writes to Goethe. "... The Sundays which once were days of joy have become the saddest days; they seem to say, we return no more, the words *return no more* sound too hard." "... "This evening, the 20th, I found your dear letter upon the table, how my heart beat as I opened it!" Again: "Some days ago I went with Zucchi to visit your apartment . . . we went up into your cabinet. I felt as if I were in a sanctuary or shrine, where one dwelt whom all honoured. I could hardly tear myself away." On the 5th of August she writes: "I dreamed last night you had come back, I hastened to the entrance door, seized both your hands, which I pressed so closely to my heart, that with the pain I awoke."

Miss Gerard gives an interesting picture of the Zucchi household; she quotes Goethe's own testimony that Angelica was overtasked, and that Zucchi was an avaricious, selfish husband. It was Goethe who sent Herder to Angelica; and Herder also seems to have been absolutely fascinated by this new friend, "the delicate,

tender soul, artistic to her finger-tips extraordinarily simple, without any bodily charm." Elsewhere he writes to his wife: "Oh, what torments might I have spared myself, had I only known earlier this noble creature, who lives shy and retired as a heavenly being . . . she is dearer to me than all else in Rome." Then he continues artlessly enough: "I am so happy with her . . . she on her side regards me with the deepest reverence, while of thee she speaks tenderly and with a certain timidity; she looks upon thee as one of the happiest of women." Poor Madame Herder gets jealous and unhappy after a time, and flies to mythology for comfort, as others have done before. She calls herself Ariadne and implores Theseus to return to his home and family. To this Theseus writes in reply: "When I went this evening to Angelica, she with infinite grace slipped upon my finger a little gold chain as a remembrance of to-day; she said it was for us both. She is in every way a sweet, angelic, and pure woman. Thou must promise an eternal friendship to her, and with me render thanks to Heaven who has given her to me to know and to love."

Angelica bestowed various tokens upon Herder, who describes to his wife, among other objects, "a little ring, which I am to put on thy finger, and with it I now seal this letter. On this side of the Alps I may look on it as mine own, and on my return give it to thee from thy sister. No one knows of this little present except the good Rieffenstein, who ordered it for her. It is, indeed, a faithful symbol of her pure tender soul, for truly Friendship and Love are one. So she represents her little soul (*seelchen*) as a tiny sparrow resting upon a branch of myrtle, a type that our union shall exist absent or present. Do not say anything of this to any one, but take the remembrance as it is meant, in good part. A purer, more exquisite creature does not exist on earth."

Herder seems to have had less satisfactory moments in the course of his

experience of life, for Miss Gerard quotes from another letter to his wife : " Still, *à propos* of Angelica, her goodness sets the balance right between me and others of her sex, who have done me bad turns. In goodness of heart she is a celestial being. I gave her thy kiss as it stood in thy letter, without transferring it to her lips. Once I did kiss her on the forehead, and once she unexpectedly seized my hand and would press it to her lips."

Finally we come to the last of what is justly called a remarkable series of letters. " Well then, in God's name my trunk is packed. All is ready ; to-morrow I leave Rome for Pisa. I am well, and, all things considered, have had a time in Rome of which few strangers can boast. . . . Angelica, who is dear and good beyond all expression, greets thee cordially, and sends thee her silhouette. Take it with feelings of love and kindness. The angel has made me during these last weeks inexpressibly happy. I would I had known her earlier ; the good, excellent, tender, beautiful soul. . . . May heaven bless and preserve this sweet woman. Farewell, my good soul, no longer to be a desolate Ariadne."

So Herder departs as Goethe had departed ; and Angelica remains in the Eternal City, still working on, still occupied with innocent fancies and enthusiasms, in which she tries to forget the present and the terrible times which were now at hand. Dukes, duchesses, goddesses, heroes, all figure in turn upon her canvas, cardinals, ladies of quality ; but meanwhile the terrible echoes from the world beyond, rumours of sorrow and disaster, began to reach them in their sunny retreat. A third inmate had joined the little household. Anton Kauffmann, a cousin, had come to help Angelica and Zucchi, who was ill and partially paralysed, in their life and household cares. Money difficulties, which had ceased to trouble them for years past,

now rose grimly before them. This was no time for posing and sitting for portraits ; people were ruined and flying for their lives, and it was with difficulty that rents or debts were collected. Antonio Zucchi, worried and anxious, fell ill and died of jaundice, leaving almost all he possessed away from his wife. Too true and disinterested to resent this insult, she mourned him with simplicity and sweetness. The epitaph she put upon his grave is well known and often quoted,—" Not as I had prayed." " It is not poverty I fear, but this dreadful solitude," she writes soon after his death. Then by degrees she in some measure revives. She travels for change of scene ; loving and appreciative friends come round her ; Kauffmann, the cousin, proves good and devoted ; she begins to work once more with that indomitable courage and buoyancy which was part of her nature. One or two of her best portraits were painted about this time. It is difficult to take it seriously when one hears of a colossal picture of Achilles, for Catherine of Russia, undertaken by Angelica at near sixty years of age. One particular journey on which she started with the cousin, to revisit the haunts of her youth, is delightfully described by Miss Gerard, and brought no little interest and pleasure. The end of Angelica's life was like herself, composed and tender and practical. " She took to her bed and one day desired her cousin to read her one of Gellert's hymns for the sick. By some mistake he began one of the order for the dying, but she stopped him. ' No, Johann,' she said, ' I will not hear that. Read me the hymn for the sick on page 128.' The cousin sought the place, found the desired hymn, and began to read. But after a few moments he looked up. Angelica had passed peacefully away, without a sigh or pain."

ANNE RITCHIE.

UNDER SEAL OF CONFESSION.

I.

THE hills rose grey under a grey sky, and across them went a white road winding upward fold beyond fold. There was no colour anywhere but the mournful tint of last year's heather, broken by stronger, blacker grey where the hard granite crags forced themselves through the sparse covering of thin turf. No living thing was in sight save a solitary curlew winging its way high overhead, and far off on the hillside a few scattered goats feeding, watched by a goatherd muffled in a sheepskin against the inclement weather, who from time to time played a few melancholy bars on his pipe to keep his flock from straying. Now and again from the low clouds that seemed to rest heavily on the hill-tops a dense fine rain drove across the landscape, blotting out all things, as one might draw a wet sponge over a slate, causing even goats and goatherd to disappear in an indistinguishable greyness. Such a rain it was as west countrymen know well; but two things (besides the conical hat and sheepskin of the herdsman) would show that this is not English Cornwall, but its French counterpart: first the smooth, hard, well-kept road, the like of which English country districts know not; secondly, the quaint little hooded carriage, containing two persons, now looming through the mist.

The bony white horse jogged along, and the driver swore at the weather in an undertone. The young priest who sat beside him drew his cassock round him and shivered. The driver turned to him presently, and pointing ahead with his whip, said in an encouraging tone: "See, yonder are the two towers of Carhaix; we shall be there soon, *mon père*, and there will be food and

shelter at the Widow Royer's. It is but a few *kilos* on to Plougallec."

But the priest only bent his head silently. Cold and wet as he was he cared little about reaching his journey's end. It was a journey unwillingly taken; to his own thinking he was going into exile, and he hardly heeded the discomforts of the way, though no doubt they added to his feeling of depression. He was out of heart and discouraged; he had just relinquished a post for which he felt himself entirely fitted, and in which every talent found congenial exercise, and was on his way to undertake a cure in a lonely Breton village, hidden away among the spurs of the Montagnes d'Arrées, and his heart sickened at the prospect. It was a post usually assigned to quite a different kind of man; to one who by birth and early training belonged to the peasants among whom he was called to minister, and who therefore on the one hand might be supposed to understand the needs of his people and to reach them by the freemasonry of class which even Republican France has not been able to abolish, and on the other would not be so likely to suffer from isolation and the absence of all congenial intercourse with cultivated minds.

A glance at the face, turned listlessly in the direction indicated by the driver's whip, would be enough to show that Armand de Jacquemard had nothing in common with the rough, good-hearted, average country priest; nor, in spite of the touch of asceticism about the high cheek-bones and blue-veined hollows under the eyebrows, had he altogether the look of the saintly enthusiast to whom all spheres of labour are alike. It was a fine countenance, but the dominant note of it was sensitiveness; you could tell at a glance that here was a man quick

to feel either pleasure or pain, keenly alive to all intellectual and refined enjoyments, and not without ambition.

But what was such a man as this doing in the wilds of Finistère? It was the question he asked himself. Honestly he tried to bow himself to the will of God; but it is not always easy to recognise that will coming through human instruments, and in the transference he felt an injustice that rankled. Well-born, and with powerful connections in the Church, he had looked forward to a brilliant career when this sudden eclipse had come, and for the time he found himself shelved. He had begun well, too. When his education was finished he had been appointed, through the interest of an uncle, assistant priest in a new church in a large and fashionable seaside town on the north coast. Full of zeal and energy he had set on foot all manner of good works; missions to seamen, orphanages, schools sprang up, or took new life, under his management. Moreover he found himself speedily the most popular preacher in the place, and, what was more remarkable, he rapidly gained a marvellous ascendancy over the fashionable idlers who thronged the neighbourhood in summer; so that to work for St. Eustache became quite the favourite pastime at Baigneville and a welcome variety in the daily round of bathing, driving, and dancing.

In the midst of the full tide of success Armand seemed in some way to have incurred the displeasure of his uncle, and the result was his removal to this remote district, this sphere of uncongenial and undistinguished labour. He may or may not have suspected the cause of offence; if he did, he attempted no justification. The matter was never named between him and his superiors; he took his sentence in silence, and started forthwith for Plougallec. He would a thousand times rather, he told himself, have been sent out to China or Madagascar, where his privations, though more severe, might have had the halo of

heroism, than eat out his heart in idle seclusion. He did not dread work, but it seemed to him there could be little to do in such a place as he was bound for. It must not be thought that he did not care for the poor. The rough sea-faring population of Baigneville had been to him the most interesting of all his flock, despite his success among a different class, and he had a strong man's respect for those who carry their lives in their hands and occupy their business in great waters; but the stolid apathetic denizens of the inland districts, whose very language he had scarcely mastered, presented a far less attractive material to work on, and it was perhaps excusable in him to feel that the task, though more difficult, was less worthy of his powers than the one he had just laid down.

Meanwhile the little hooded carriage had lumbered up the hill, between the two gaunt but stately churches, past the grey old convent with its rows of narrow, secretive-looking windows, then swinging round the corner beneath ancient projecting gables, rich with carvings which were a marvel of rude bygone art, and rattling over the stones, pulled up in front of the low white inn where the Widow Royer stood at the open door to welcome new arrivals. The good woman would fain have ushered M. le Recteur into the cold and dignified seclusion of the dining-room, but he much preferred to warm his chilled hands at the hospitable kitchen-fire, while she and her white-coiffed hand-maidens bustled about preparing a hasty repast, for another carriage was already being made ready to convey the traveller to his ultimate destination before the early night should fall.

Another wayfarer was in possession of the chimney corner; a young sailor, drinking a glass of cider, who had already tramped some distance according to the testimony of his muddy shoes. He moved civilly away at the approach of the new comer, but the priest bade him remain; there was plenty of room

for both on the broad oaken settle. He liked the look of the lad's open countenance, and indeed there is something wonderfully taking about a Breton sailor in his holiday garb. In reality he may very likely be the rough, hard-drinking, half barbarous personage that M. Loti's novels so graphically depict; but in his outward man, with the dainty cleanliness of all his appointments, the snow-white cap with its scarlet tuft set rakishly on one side, the little crimson anchors embroidered on his sleeve, his naïve simplicity and air of good fellowship, he has the effect of having just stepped off the deck of H.M.S. *Pinafore*. The boy looked barely eighteen; he was short and rather thickset, with close curling brown hair showing under the white cap which was pushed to the back of his head; his eyes were grey like clear water, such eyes as you may often see among the fisher folk on the Cornish coast.

Thawed by the warmth of the fire, and perhaps cheered a little by the look of the bright face opposite, Armand was about to shake off the numbness of fatigue and cold and enter into conversation with his neighbour, when the latter drained his glass, and setting it down with a civil "Good night, sir," went his way.

"That is one of M. le Recteur's parishioners," said Widow Royer, placing a large dish of eggs on the table and drawing up a chair. "He has been away a year at Brest, on service, and he has just come back on leave to see his old Mother. A very decent woman is Mother Nédélec, and has had a deal of trouble. Her sons were a wild drinking lot, all but Hervé there; he is the youngest, and a very good sort of boy. She is a strange woman in her ways and keeps herself to herself; nobody seems to know much about her, though she has lived in Plougallec all her life. Folks do say she isn't as poor as she makes out; but she lives in a miserable bit of a place right away beyond the great cross as you go up to the ruined

chapel. It is just where the path turns down the gorge to the place they call the Devil's Cauldron. But Monsieur has not seen that yet? It is quite a show; there's many comes in the summer just to look at it. Hervé used to make a good bit of money before he went to sea, taking visitors round; for it is a curious place, worth seeing, they say, for them that has got a steady head, but dangerous for strangers. Will Monsieur please to come to the table? The carriage will be round in less than half an hour."

Another little ramshackle hooded cabriolet was produced presently, with another gaunt and bony horse, and by way of variety a hunchbacked driver who could not speak a word of French; and the priest, after his brief rest, mounted into his place and resumed his journey. Still the same grey hills and granite tors looking huge and menacing through the mist as the light faded. By and by Armand's ear, weary of the monotonous hoof-beats on the hard road, caught another sound, blythe as a lark's song, a merry tune such as the men and women dance to at the country fairs, whistled clear and loud by a traveller as he plodded along. Soon the carriage overtook the wayfarer, and the priest, leaning forward, recognised the young sailor, and perceived too that, in spite of his cheery whistle, he was walking gingerly as if he were footsore and chafed by his heavy shoes. With a hasty gesture he checked the driver, and bade the lad mount beside him. The hunchback growled, but if he made any objection it was lost on his auditor, being couched in an unknown tongue, and the boy sprang nimbly in and curled himself up on the straw at the bottom of the carriage, declining the proffered share of the seat.

As they jogged on Armand roused himself with an effort out of the regrets for the past and gloomy forebodings for the future in which he had been indulging, and began to talk to his companion. When he chose to exert himself he had a great gift of attraction,

and he soon grew interested, in spite of his depression of spirits, in the lad's frank and simple chatter of himself, his seafaring adventures, and especially about his home. Insensibly his heart warmed to this first sample of his parishioners. He purposely drew him on to enlarge on his life at Plougallec, to describe the hard work on the upland farms, the roystering fun at the yearly *Kermesse*, the long dreary winter, and the old tales and legends that haunted every hill and rock, for he found as he listened that he was gleaning some notion of the people with whom he would have to deal. He had thought he understood Frenchmen, but the Breton nature was new to him, with its hardness and its simplicity, its deep religious sentiment, its clinging to tradition, its credulity bordering on superstition, its loyalty and its almost fierce independence; and he began to see that, if rougher on the surface, it was no less interesting. He took some lessons too from his new friend in the strange old British tongue which still lingers where the railway has not penetrated, but is fast dying out as it has already died out among ourselves. Slow as their progress was over the steep hills, he was surprised to find how many long miles had been passed when, as they reached the towering cross his companion swung himself down with grateful thanks, and disappeared in a rocky gorge.

The encounter had cheered De Jacquemard, and he did not feel so lonely as he expected when he entered the little bare white-washed presbytery, adjoining the church, which was to be his home.

II.

THE line of the Arrées are glowing purple and golden and blue, under the hot afternoon sunshine of July. The flood of radiance had washed away all the gloom of winter even from the frowning granite tors, and turned the inky weather-stains into delicate shades of amethyst, which served to tone down

the insistent brilliance where heather, mingled with gorse and dotted with patches of succory, almost wearied the eye.

The lank spare form of Père Jacquemard in his black cassock looked rather like one of the rooks which from time to time alighted and stalked about among the flowers. All around, the silence was murmurous with the hum of little wings, and the joy of living manifested itself on every side in crowds of butterflies which danced and wavered above the yellow blossoms.

The summer had got into Armand's heart too, and showed itself in the alert springing step with which he strode across the hills. If his removal from Baigneville had been intended as retribution for any misdeed, it had failed, for he was happy; if as discipline, it had succeeded. He was learning the lesson it takes most of us a lifetime to master, that if we will but adjust ourselves to our circumstances, instead of straining against them, it is possible to find both work and happiness where perhaps we would not have chosen to seek them. It would probably have surprised those who had appointed him, could they have seen how effective the fashionable preacher of Baigneville was among these ignorant farmers. Probably the secret of success was the same in both cases, and lay in the gift of an unusually sympathetic temperament. He never tried consciously to adapt himself to his hearers, but spoke out of the sincerity of his own heart, and whether to peer or peasant the appeal went home.

The one thing impossible to Armand was stagnation. His busy brain was as full of schemes for the benefit of his flock as it had ever been, and it was in pursuit of one of these that he was marching across the hills to-day. His church was large, but it was situated at one corner of the widely scattered parish, and he had set his heart on the restoration of an ancient ruined chapel at the further end. He

would have found no difficulty in collecting more than the sum he needed among his former parishioners, but he wanted to teach his people to help themselves, so he utilised the little gifts that their thriftiness (we will not call it parsimony) would bestow, and from those who had no money to give, he got a day's labour or a load of stones, worth far more to him as proof of his hold on their love than any number of francs from the outside world.

His present errand was not a very hopeful one. It would have seemed to most people scarcely worth while to come so far out of his way to ask for a contribution of a few sous from Mother Nédélec who had the reputation of being close-fisted, and from her own account had barely enough to keep body and soul together. Her little cottage stood by itself at some distance from the high road at the opening of a wild rocky gorge. Just beyond it the path forked, one way leading by a short cut to Carhaix, the other winding down to an extraordinary spot where one might fancy a company of giant children had been playing at houses with the monstrous boulders, as human children build with pebbles. Tradition named the successive grottoes the sleeping-chamber, the parlour, and the kitchen. The last was the most awful of all, for in its depths a brown torrent formed a seething cauldron, and woe betide any one who should slip on the round polished boulders that flanked it. Legend of saint and devil ascribed a miraculous origin, and lent a deeper interest to the place; far as it lay out of the beaten track, travellers occasionally left the diligence at the nearest point on the high road, and came to peer awestruck into its mysterious depths. Before Hervé went to sea, it had been his task to act as guide, piloting the unaccustomed visitor warily with strong hand and watchful eye, and relating with a Breton's unconscious poetry the old-world stories of the place. He had not failed to introduce his friend the

priest to what he considered the chief lion of Plougallec, but Armand shrank with an unaccountable distaste from the gloomy spot.

Ere long he reached the old woman's solitary dwelling and rapped. There was no answer, and after a repeated summons, he went to the little window which, though rather high up in the wall, his tall stature could command, and peered in. He knew Mother Nédélec was deaf, and he was unwilling to assume that he had had his long hot tramp in vain, till he had made certain that the cottage was empty. At first, dazzled with the sunshine, he could make out nothing, but presently he perceived the stiff wings of her white cap bending over something in the corner by the black oak bureau. As his eye got used to the obscurity, he saw what was in her hand, a long stocking of grey blue wool, and into it she was counting money; he could hear the chink of the pieces as they fell, and could see the gleam of gold. So after all rumour had not been so far wrong!

He would not startle her nor betray that he had seen her occupation by rapping on the window, but returned to the door, to which a repeated and peremptory summons brought her after a brief delay. Mother Nédélec was a pale old woman with handsome aquiline features; her gray eyes were cold and hard, and her thin lipped mouth shut tight. She listened civilly to the priest's explanation of his errand, but gave a cold response. She was a very poor old woman, she said, with hardly enough to put bread into her mouth. She wondered M. le Recteur should take the trouble to come so far for what she could give. Why not ask M. Michelet? He could afford to build the chapel all himself and not feel it. Armand, looking at her white face and lean wrinkled neck, could have believed these professions of poverty, but for what he had seen through the window. He was too much of a gentleman to refer to this; in fact, he felt as though he had been playing

the spy, and the feeling seemed to cripple his eloquence. He tried however to explain to the old woman that the value lay in the goodwill of the giver, and that her little gift would be quite as precious as M. Michelet's if it was in proportion to her means. But he was glad to depart presently, with a contribution of two sous in his pocket.

III.

In the cool freshness of an October morning Armand was pacing up and down the little narrow orchard that adjoined the presbytery. The sunlight flickered down upon his tansured head through the branches; the mists were clearing, but left every leaf and blade of grass thick strung with glittering gems which the skirt of his cassock brushed off as he passed. His breviary was in his hand, his forefinger marking the place as he held it half closed, and his lips moved from time to time.

Into the stillness broke suddenly a noise, a confusion, a horror. First a cry, then hurrying feet, then shrill voices all together, and through the broken exclamations of terror and dismay the ghastly tale was presently unfolded. There had been murder up in the lonely gorge by the Devil's Cauldron. Mère Nédélec lay on her cottage floor in a pool of blood with a hideous gash across the back of her head, and Hervé was already in custody for the murder of his mother. He had been met flying like a madman from the house, and then this horrible discovery had been made.

Hardly waiting to hear the details which were poured in upon him from every mouth, Père Jacquemard vaulted over the paling that divided his orchard from the road, and hastened to the place with the ever thickening crowd. The *gendarmes* were already in possession, and the curious throng had to content themselves with what they could see through the high narrow window. A kind farmer's wife was trying to lead away little Georgette,

the murdered woman's granddaughter, the only creature who had been in the house with her; but the child, sick with terror and bewildered with the questions of the *gendarmes*, refused to stir, and struggled and fought against the kind hands that tried to hold her. At sight of M. le Recteur she wrenched herself away and flew to him, hiding her face in his skirts. He picked her up in his arms, and presently, feeling herself safe and sheltered in that eminence, she whispered in his ear the little she could tell of the events of the night.

She had been put to bed early as usual in the oak press bed in the wall with the doors drawn close, and in the middle of the night she had woken in a fright, hearing a loud hoarse scream and a heavy sound like a fall, then a sort of gurgling noise, and then the door banged and all was still. She had been too frightened to call out at first, and then she thought that perhaps she had had the nightmare and that grandmother would be angry if she screamed, and so lay trembling till she slept again. In the morning she woke suddenly; she thought she heard the door slam again but was not sure, and grandmother had never come to bed, and it seemed all strange and dreadful. And then people came, and there was poor grandmother on the floor all blood—

This was all she could tell, and Armand questioned it out of her by degrees and repeated it to the official who wrote it down. Some one asked whether any robbery had been committed. Had the old soul anything to lose? Then Armand told what he had seen of the little hoard of coins counted into the old stocking. Search was made, and revealed that a drawer in the bureau had been wrenched open and was empty. This seemed to supply what had hitherto been lacking in the evidence, a possible motive for the crime. "This makes it look blacker still for the young fellow," said the man who had been taking

notes. "Who else could have known or suspected the existence of the money?"

"Where is he?" asked the priest. "Can I speak to him?"

This, however, could not be permitted; the *gendarmes* declared they had no authority to allow any one access to their prisoner. A disused pigsty had been turned into a temporary gaol, while a conveyance was being fetched to drive the accused to the town; and there he was sitting in close custody. What he had to say for himself could only be gleaned from the people who were there when he was taken.

By his own story, he had got an unexpected furlough and had come from Brest as far as Carhaix by diligence, and thence had set out to walk, but as the night was foggy he had stayed at a little tavern about a mile from his mother's cottage. Armand shrewdly suspected that the attractions of vermouth had proved too strong for his not very steady head. With the earliest dawn he had started, slipping out unfortunately without rousing any one, having paid his reckoning overnight. To his astonishment he found the cottage-door ajar, and stepping in, he had almost fallen over the prostrate body of his mother. He had not even thought to look for the child who was sleeping behind the closed doors, but rushing out, nearly mad with terror, had met two peasants setting off to their field-work, who, taking his incoherent consternation and blood-stained hands for evidence of guilt, hastened to rouse the village and summon the *gendarmes*.

To Armand nothing but the testimony of eye-witnesses would have seemed evidence worth considering. Hervé's open, boyish face and clear eyes came before him with irrefutable witness of the impossibility of a crime so hideous. He lingered about the spot for a while, on the chance of discovering something that might throw light on the mystery.

Presently there was a movement among the crowd, and the little

cart that was to take the prisoner away was heard lumbering over the narrow, stony road. It was awkward to turn just here, and the spectators were forced to scramble up the bank out of the way. There seemed quite a little lane of them to pass through when the accused was led out, pale, wide-eyed, with the gaze of a terrified child, between two men in uniform. The appealing look he cast at the priest, as he caught sight of him, was like little Georgette's when she had rushed to hide her face in those friendly arms. The utter helplessness and trust in it went straight to Armand's heart. He pressed forward. The *gendarmes* hurried their prisoner into the cart and whipped up the horse. "God help you, my boy! I will do all I can for you."

It was all there was time for. He remained watching so long as the cart was in sight; and Hervé, looking back, could see the thin, black figure standing out against the sky, and knew there was one man who believed in his innocence.

IV.

It was the evening of All Souls' day. Masses for the dead had been going on all day in the old church among the hills; vespers were just over, the congregation had dispersed, and the sacristan glided noiselessly about extinguishing the lights. Only the priest lingered. He had laid aside his vestments and knelt, a black shadow among the shadows, in one of the side chapels. His heart was heavy. The day before he had gone to Quimper to visit Hervé Nédélec in the prison; the trial was but ten days' distant, and not a scrap of evidence was forthcoming to exculpate the poor lad. The unlucky point was that he had slipped out of the public-house with the earliest dawn, without seeing any one; not a soul could testify that he had really spent the night there; it looked very black.

The sacristan paused, having ended

his task ; he straightened a few books and hassocks in the choir and coughed deferentially ; he wanted to go home to his supper, poor man. Armand rose from his knees. "You can lock the doors and go, I have my key of the sacristy. Lock that door also as you go out, I do not wish to be disturbed." The man obeyed, murmuring as he went that M. le Recteur would kill himself with his fasts and vigils. He locked the great west doors first, then the south porch ; the little chancel door was fast already. Then he went out by the sacristy ; the outer door clanged behind him and the key turned with a click.

Now Armand felt himself alone. He returned to the shrine of St. Co-rentin and threw himself on his knees upon the stones. It was no personal sorrow that weighed him down, but sympathy for the best-loved of his flock in this cruel tribulation ; and horror also, that a ghastly crime had been committed here, in his very parish, and that he could do nothing to avert the punishment that was about to fall upon an innocent head. He went over his last interview with Hervé in the prison. The poor lad had knelt at his feet, and with the candour and simplicity of a child had made confession of his sins ; of a drunken brawl at Brest, of his neglect of Mass, of the many slips of his rough and sorely tempted life. It was not possible that a hideous crime lurked behind. And when the priest had absolved and blessed him, he had burst into a flood of boyish tears, and, seizing the kind hands, sobbed out : "Oh, my father, you know I am innocent ! Can't you save me ? It seems too terrible to die so, with such a shame on me ! I did love my poor mother, though I was not always such a good son as I might have been. They have taken away my money ; they say I robbed her of it, when I was bringing it to her. Perhaps they would let me have some of it to give you to say a mass for her soul."

"Don't trouble about the money, boy ; the masses shall be said."

The warder's step was heard in the corridor outside, intimating that it was time the interview should end. It went near to break Armand's heart to leave the boy there in his cell, sitting on the side of his narrow bed. And now the time was slipping by, and there was no help, no hope. He flung his whole soul into the petition that some discovery might be made in time.

He was so lost in prayer that the sound of a heavy footstep advancing up the aisle did not at first surprise him ; it roused him from his abstraction however, and he rose to confront a rough-looking man in sailor's dress, with a pale face and a tangled red beard. In his hand he carried a long stocking of blue-grey wool, knotted to serve as a purse.

"What do you want with me so late ?" asked De Jacquemard, who did not recognise his visitor, but thought he must have brought a summons to some deathbed or hurried baptism.

"I would confess, father," was the answer in a surly tone.

"I do not usually hear confessions at this hour. Would not the morning do as well ? Come early, before mass, and I will hear you."

"No, the morning would not do as well for me. Will you hear me or no ?"

Struck with the strangeness of the man's tone Armand recollected the locked doors, and the wonder flashed across his mind how could the fellow have made his way in. But he could not refuse such a request, however inopportune made, so he entered the confessional and proceeded to put the usual questions. The penitent put these aside unanswered, and proceeded to tell his story in his own way. As he listened the priest felt his heart stand still ; a cold shudder ran over him ; his hair bristled upon his head ; was this the answer to his prayers ?

The man stated that he was a sailor, that he belonged to Plougallec, and had known Mother Nédélec and her hoarding ways of old. Then he went

on to relate in a hoarse, rapid whisper how he had been coming home on foot across the mountains after a long voyage, penniless, having squandered all his money at Brest; how, as he passed the cottage at the head of the gorge, the thought had come to him how lonesome it was, how easy it would be to overcome the old woman's feeble resistance, and possess himself of her savings; how he had entered the cottage and struck her down with a cowardly blow from behind, before she had time to turn or cry, and had left her lying there in her blood.

Then he stopped, and the priest who had listened as one paralysed, cried out: "You must give yourself up to justice; it is the only expiation you can make. Do you know that an innocent man is suffering for your crime? Will you confess this publicly to-morrow?"

"Nay, I have done enough," was the answer. "Take the money."

All this time he had held his primitive purse fast in his right hand. Now he poured out the gold coins into his left, and flung them on the ledge in front of the confessional with such force that several pieces bounded off and rolled upon the floor. The thought darted into Armand's mind, as he stooped to gather them up, how Judas cast down the pieces of money in the Temple. He was not stooping more than a moment, but when he raised his head his strange penitent was gone.

The church was very dark; only the hanging lamps before the altar cast here and there a feeble and uncertain light. Armand hastened down the aisle to the west door, but it was locked. The man might be lurking in the south porch, hidden in the shadow of the deep intersecting arches; but no, that door too was fast. He retraced his steps and looked into the sacristy; no one was there. He tried the handle, fancying he might have been mistaken in thinking he heard the key turn in the lock, but it would not yield. Could the stranger have

been hidden in the church from the time of evening service? He took a lantern from a shelf, lighted it, and explored every corner. All in vain; however he had accomplished it, the man had made good his escape. Armand then looked at the money in his hand. There were seventeen gold pieces; sixteen were napoleons, and the seventeenth was an old Spanish doubloon. Having counted them carefully, he put them into a small iron box, at present empty, which he used for keeping alms for special purposes, and locked the box safely away in a strong cupboard in the wall. This done, he unlocked the sacristy door and let himself out, fastening it again behind him.

It was a wild and blustering night, but the rough wind was grateful to his feverish blood. He was agitated and perplexed, and for hours he paced up and down his room, distracted as to what could be done. It was an agonising situation; to know the truth, and to be utterly powerless to act; to have a clue, and to feel that in following it he would be committing a mortal sin, was torture unutterable. Only one faint hope remained; the man's own conscience, not wholly dead, might drive him into giving himself up to justice, now that he knew that an innocent man was about to suffer for his crime. It was possible; but was it likely? His sudden disappearance looked rather as though his confession had been repented of so soon as made.

Dawn came at last, and Armand threw himself on his bed to rest his limbs for an hour or so, though with little hope of sleep. Wearied out as he was, slumber fell on him suddenly, and he found himself walking near the scene of the murder, but away from the cottage, through the gorge towards the Devil's Cauldron. It was very dark and he was alone; he wished to turn back but could not; he kept clambering over the great boulders, trying to get away, and all the time feeling himself drawn nearer and

nearer to the chasm. The struggle was so great that he woke, to find himself clutching the edge of his wooden bedstead in an agonised grip. Such sleep was worse than waking; he resumed his walk, and till far on into the morning paced up and down the narrow room, trying to calm his agitated thoughts. His haunting fear was lest the confession had been almost involuntary, wrung by stress of remorse from a tortured soul, and that already the guilty man had fled. There seemed but little probability, either that he would give himself up, or that anything would happen to reveal the truth in the little time that yet remained. For himself Armand was powerless; his lips were sealed; this knowledge must be to him as though he had it not.

In the course of the day a message came, requesting the priest to visit an old bedridden parishioner, Loic Goan by name, living in a lonely part of the hills not far from the cottage of Mother Nédélec. His ministrations over, Armand was about to leave the room, when the old man beckoned him back mysteriously, and signed to him to stoop down his ear to his lips.

"Have you heard anything of my son down in the village, my father?" he asked in a loud whisper, though there was no one within hearing.

"Your son? I don't think I know him. I did not even know you had a son," answered De Jacquemard.

"Well, I have not seen him these five years," said the old man; "and it is not that I want him; I would sooner that he kept away. He has been a bad son, and the truth is I am afraid of him; but they say he has been seen near here, and I can't rest till I know. The last I heard of him, he had gone on a voyage to China, but he would be back by this time. He must know that it's no use coming here for what I can give him; but if he comes terrifying me as he did last time, it will be the death of me."

"What makes you fancy he has returned?" asked the priest.

"Why, as my daughter-in-law was coming home from vespers last night, a man brushed past her so close as quite to startle her, and she declares it was Jean Baptiste."

"I have not heard any one mention any stranger in the village," returned De Jacquemard, with an uneasy recollection of his penitent last night. "What was your son like?"

"He was a big fellow, a fine made man with a red beard, and he had a bit of a scar at the side of his eyebrow. Marie says she saw the scar quite plain in the moonlight, and that was what made her so certain."

There was no doubt about it then; he had himself observed the scar as the lamplight fell on the kneeling figure. His penitent was Goan's son. "What do you wish," he asked constrainedly, "if I should meet the man you describe?"

"I don't know that I wish anything," said the old father, "but to know him out of the country again. I can't sleep easy at nights for thinking of him."

Convinced as he felt that the poor old man would never again be troubled with his worthless son, Armand was unable to give him the assurance, and after a few vague, consolatory words, left him, heavy-hearted. He had hitherto avoided the road past the scene of the murder: to his nervous, sensitive temperament, the sight of the forsaken cottage was too distressing; but now some strange impulse, perhaps a morbid one, prompted him to return by the Devil's Cauldron. The way led within a few yards of the chasm which had figured so painfully in his last night's dream. As he drew near a strange feeling of horror overwhelmed him, an anguished sense of trouble and dismay beyond what any mere association could produce; his knees shook and his breath seemed almost to fail. For an instant he fancied he saw the pale, red-bearded face of his penitent against a grey boulder in the gathering dusk. He crossed himself and looked steadily at

it ; it disappeared, and he hastened on.

As he was leaving the church after vespers that evening, it suddenly occurred to him to count the money again. It could hardly be of much avail, since it could not be used as evidence against the criminal ; but he felt a desire to examine it once more. The keys were in his pocket where they had lain ever since he put the coins away on the preceding night. He unlocked the cupboard, and carried the little box across to his own room, thinking, as he did so, how strangely light it felt. The lock was a complicated one, but the key made the double turn with ease ; the lid fell back, and Armand remained gazing into it speechless with dismay. It was absolutely empty ! It was quite impossible for anybody to have had access to it ; the sacristy had been locked, as fast as the safe in which the box had been placed. There was only one solution possible ; he had been the victim of an hallucination, and no penitent had knelt in the confessional pouring into his ears the story of his crime. There was no deliverance after all for poor Hervé ; the whole thing must have been a dream. Slender as the hope had been, the disappointment was sharp ; Armand buried his face in his hands and burst into tears.

After another sleepless night, tortured by thoughts of the unhappy prisoner awaiting his doom, in the grey of the morning the priest fell asleep, and again that hideous dream came upon him. Once more he was among the great boulders by the Devil's Cauldron ; he tried to turn and fly, but unseen hands were dragging him on, till he felt himself falling over the edge, and clutching wildly, with a hoarse cry, he woke. To sleep again was impossible ; he rose and sat by the window till daylight broadened in the east. Then a thought

came to him ; he dressed and went out, walking with a quick firm stride in the direction of the gorge. The sun had risen by the time he reached the spot, and was shining down into the awful chasm. As Armand leaned over the brink, his eyes fell upon a prostrate body, with pale face, framed in a ragged, tawny beard, turned up to the pitiless light ; one arm was bent and doubled under the body as though broken ; in the other hand was a stocking of coarse grey wool, knotted in the middle ; the dress was that of a sailor.

Within half an hour the *gendarmes* were on the spot, and the corpse was drawn up with ropes and examined. It was identified as Jean Baptiste Goan by the scar on the eyebrow. Without doubt the man had been dead a considerable time ; and every indication pointed to a fall in his flight on the night of the murder. His back was broken and his arm, but there were no wounds about him to account for the bloodstains on his hands and clothes ; moreover a sailor's dirk, much stained, was sticking in his belt. Armand asked to be allowed to see the contents of the stocking ; they were sixteen napoleons and one Spanish doubloon. The fellow stocking was found in Mother Nédélec's bureau. So Hervé's innocence was established. The dead man had already paid the penalty of his crimes, and passed beyond the reach of human justice.

Armand kept silence about the events of the night of All Souls' ; but long after he had been removed to a different post, far from Brittany, mysterious rumours crept about, and a new legend grew up around the Devil's Cauldron ; the story of a miraculous vision vouchsafed in answer to the prayers of a saint, uncanonised save in the hearts of his people.

THE HOUSE OF THE WICKED BAKER.

FINDING, during a recent visit to London, that I had an afternoon disengaged, I decided on resisting the attractions of the Royal Academy, or of other places where I might have fore-gathered with more of fashion than would suit the rustic cut of my apparel, and revisiting, for the first time in many years, the house of the Wicked Baker.

With the Baker himself I had no expectation of renewing my acquaintance. That worthy (the epithet universally applied to millers is more or less affected by their satellites) had no doubt taken his departure for a place where it is to be hoped he will meet with more charity than was doled out to him here. But the sight of the well-remembered shop, the scene at once of his labours and his errors, would no doubt serve to awake slumbering memories of boyhood with some of which he, poor fellow, had no immediate concern. I forgot that it is sometimes best to let memories, like sleeping dogs, lie.

There may be quicker ways of going to Hampstead than by omnibus, but I chose the latter because it was the way I remembered. The Heath looked trimmer, better kept, and of a dignity to which "Hi spy hi" (which I used so often to play there) would no doubt be as offensive as the greeting of a ragged and disreputable-looking play-mate to one recently arrived at respectability and broadcloth. Jack Straw's Castle was still there, and "The Spaniards," at which latter hostelry I purchased (through the instrumentality of "Warlike," the school costermonger) my first cigar. Although my expedition had for its object the renewing of old memories, the recollection of that awful weed was too abiding to need any reviving. Walking from Hampstead to Highgate I passed the cricket-ground on which I played

my first game of cricket, and on which still stood the stumpy old oak tree that I once thought it no small feat to climb. The "Old Gate House" I found had been embellished into a resort for quite a superior class of toppers, and opposite the "Old Gate House" was a long high brick wall. Behind the wall rose the handsome school buildings, new since my time, but occupying the same site as the old ones. In the wall was a door giving admittance to the school through a small gravel-coated playground, which was, in my day, a sort of "Sixpenny" (as the Etonians have it) and sacred to pugilistic encounters. Just beyond this door was the house of the Wicked Baker.

The Baker when I first knew him was a middle-aged man of vast strength, his stature slightly bowed from the weight of the sacks of flour which he was accustomed to bear on his own broad back from the miller's waggon. He was grey-haired, kind-eyed, with a perpetual peach-like bloom on his rugged face which was no doubt the combined effect of his oven and the potatoes to which it incited. I never saw him in a coat, and the sleeves of his blue linen shirt were rolled high on his muscular and hairy arms. His wife was a thin, sour-faced woman who was reported to don, metaphorically, the lower garments which are endured in reality by man. After he became wicked (for he was not always so) I remember that he aged rapidly, instead of flourishing, as might have been expected, like a green bay-tree. The school which he served was a large one even in my day, and he no doubt made a good living by catering for the hundred or so of little fellows for whose imaginary needs he provided huge trays of hot buns and other delicacies brought up smoking from the oven on our release from

school. I have never eaten such buns since. To the Baker's care too were consigned the victors or losers (sometimes the former required as much or more care than the latter) in the aforesaid fistic arena. He was wont (with what efficacy I forget) to apply cold steel to our bruises and contusions, and even good-naturedly to resign (at any rate temporarily) on serious occasions for our behoof the raw beefsteak which had been provided for his dinner. His oven was always open to roast the eggs of those of us who surreptitiously kept hens. To us he appeared a harmless and even a good-natured man, though his good nature was perhaps chiefly in evidence when we wished to evade the regulations laid down by the authorities. It was a great shock when on re-assembling after the holidays we found our friend transformed, as if by magic, into the Wicked Baker. From thenceforth not a boy must, under pain of severe punishment, enter his shop. His trade (for he had made little attempt at gaining or retaining any custom but ours) was ruined at a blow, and the Baker from that day was a broken man.

His shop is gone, changed into some sort of an office; and, as I said, the Baker himself has no doubt long since departed. I was too young accurately to know what his sin was, but it evidently did not lay him open to the penalties of the law. Yet whatever it was, he should have had some chance of forgiveness, even if not to the extent of seventy times seven. There are many to whom forgiveness is not even once accorded. But indeed the potentate whom he somehow offended was not of a forgiving nature. This I am inclined the more to regret since I have never been able to assure myself that he was so sinless as not to have since needed for himself the mercy that he denied.

While the poor Baker is, let us hope, at rest, and the potentate aforesaid has ceased from troubling, there must be survivors, to whom both of these

ministered after their manner, who still shudder at the intruding recollection of those Monday mornings whose anticipated misery brought but little happiness to the Sunday; of the glass door whose veiling with a green baize curtain was but an unmeaning tribute to decency, since few indeed were ignorant of the hideous rites solemnised with such fateful regularity inside.

Huic exaudiri gemitus et seve sonare Verbera.

There is one survivor at all events who can still recall the gradual change from the stern joy of the executioner *in posse* to the breathless pause at the enforced ending of the frantic and bloodthirsty attack; the feeling that there was something wrong somewhere, the callousness gradually developed. Most assuredly I never in those days doubted that of the two sinners the Butcher was worse than the Baker.

Well, I can soon forget him again. There are actually sorrows to be met with without going back to one's boyhood. Certainly there were those who suffered more than we did. Youth, health, and hope which sprang from them, enabled us to laugh, grimly perhaps, but still to laugh at our troubles. But I almost wish I had left the Baker alone; the Usher (I never think of him if I can help it) was sure to follow. The Baker, if he was really wicked (I always had my doubts about it), may have been deserving of some punishment. But the Usher!—I should wonder if there are any ushers nowadays, only if there are I had rather not know.

In old times when you went down the hill towards the big City, you first left behind you the red brick residences of the older inhabitants surrounded by high-walled gardens which seemed to frown on the gayer and more ambitious mansions of the *nouveaux riches*. Then you passed the fashionable repositories with plate-glass windows. From fashion-

able the shops got gradually to pure useful, and from useful degenerated into downright shabby. Some of these last may possibly have seen better days; they could not possibly have seen worse. They retired modestly, and as if ashamed of themselves, from the footpath and carriage-way, thrusting forward little bare enclosures, which may once have been lawns, of three or four square yards, between themselves and the broken palings which ran by the side of the pavement. In one of these park-like enclosures two goats might generally be seen strutting about. The little shop before which they strutted was one of the poorest of a very poor class indeed, and the goats had but infrequent opportunities of butting their owner's customers, though what opportunities they had they made the most of. Ginger-beer, passers-by were informed in the usual doggerel, was sold here (or would have been sold had anybody wanted it) long after the frosts of winter suggested its withdrawal; and a few tarts of uncertain age, and, if possible, still more uncertain composition, used to occupy the place of honour in the little window. If you looked in you saw a counter with a dingy pair of scales thereon, an empty barrel which might once have contained herrings, a bundle or two of tallow candles (too few in number to account satisfactorily for the odour of the shop, to which that of the goats was as incense) and a dirty little grey old man with an uncanny likeness to the most truculent of the goats, who shuffled about with slipped feet and hands in pockets while his little twinkling black eyes appeared to be on the look-out for customers who never came. Our boys (nice boys, some of them,) never passed the shop without hailing him in uncomplimentary terms; when he would come to the door and curse them (I have no doubt they richly deserved it) in what was reputed to be Norwegian; and indeed no other language could

possibly have broken more bones. That there was some special reason, or that he thought so, for his animosity, or for the regular attentions paid him by our fellows was evident enough, and I had not been long at D——'s before I learnt that the old gentleman was no other than the father of Bernstoff the Usher, who occupied a very subordinate place among our masters. First, a long way first, came D—— himself, D.D. and archflogger. Then came a Bachelor of Arts who lived in a house of his own, and took boarders. Next in dignity were two or three non-descripts of no particular eminence, and bringing up the rear came poor Bernstoff. The Usher was a tall, thin, sawy, by no means good-looking man of about thirty. He worked harder and longer than his superiors, who indeed were his superiors in nothing but pay and position; of what else, some would ask, does superiority consist? He had to do all the drudgery of the school, and to take the blame of everything that went wrong. After school-work was over it was his duty to superintend the large boarding house with its thirty or forty boys; and he never had a minute to himself, at all events until his young plagues had disappeared for the night. It used to be said that he intended "going into the Church." How he could have done so is a mystery, except in the same way that we all went into it twice on Sunday, when of course he had to go with us, and to come out when we did. There was a rumour that he wrote sermons at his desk when he ought to have been correcting exercises; but I feel sure he was too conscientious for that. I am afraid he was miserably underpaid, or rather that he was hardly paid at all. On Saturdays, when we went off to cricket, he used to go quietly down the hill to visit his old parent in the goat-defended shop. I hoped he enjoyed his half-holiday, but it scarcely seems likely. He never had anything approaching to fun that we could see; he

never laughed, and very rarely smiled. Yet he never looked cross. There was a kind, long-suffering look in his eyes which ought to have made him friends of the little imps he was so forbearing with. He got to like me (I cannot imagine why) in his quiet way; but I think his preference made me feel ashamed rather than proud, though I have long since got to own what a fine fellow he must have been. I have always wished that I had not known about the old father and the goats, or at all events that he had not known that I knew. I am glad to remember that I never insulted him as some did, and as we all might have done with very little fear of consequences, for he was not supported by his chief. Poor fellow! he died soon after I left, and this was the best thing he could do; the worst was being born. Dying, I fancy, was his only chance of "joining the Ministry" which was, if I remember rightly, the exact form his earthly aspirations had taken. Few tears probably were shed for him, he would not have expected or understood such lamentations; but as a type of the old-fashioned, ill-used usher without hope, he has always had a soft nook in my memory. But, as I said, I never think of him if I can help it. There, it is time they slumbered again, these memories so seldom aroused.

So I started on my way down the hill, looking about me slyly for more memories,—as if I had not had enough already. Here is where Keble's, the fruiterer's shop, used to stand. I remember he kept open on Sunday, and was in consequence tabooed. Somewhere about this spot, in an old

red-brick mansion, S—— used to live, the unfortunate boy who was so plump that D—— (who was a bit of an artist) never could resist flogging him. He was removed by his father, not a day too soon. To my astonishment the site of S——'s house and grounds, together with those of other people whose sons used to wail weekly behind the green curtain, have been swallowed up by a new People's Park. This I enter to see what is to be seen. The park is crowded with nursemaids and children, young mothers, and the like. As I stand looking about me, two old men pass by walking arm in arm, and with a steadiness that suggests twice the circuit of the little park will be sufficient for their no longer juvenile limbs. Something familiar (yet how unfamiliar!) in their appearance leads me to examine them, not without a thrill of excitement. Is it possible they were at school with me? The one on the right faintly recalls the giant (as we thought him) S——r, who thrashed the 'bus-conductor so nobly; and the other might be (I will suppose he is) my old friend W——, with whom I had that encounter in the little playground aforesaid, whereby he gained the endowment for life of a Roman nose. I would speak to them, but they hobble off fast, or with a plausible imitation of speed. Perhaps it is best so, since, if I spoke to them they would probably think me an impostor; failing this they would certainly deem me a bore; and it is in any case likely that they have long since forgotten all about the Wicked Baker.

GEORGE FOX.

"ENGLAND," wrote Voltaire, in 1731, "is properly the country of sectarists. An Englishman, as one to whom liberty is natural, may go to heaven his own way." The epigram is a curious commentary upon the futility of attempting to enforce uniformity in religion. Barely fifty years before the great Frenchman took up his residence at Wandsworth, Jeffreys had sent Baxter to prison and set Muggleton in the pillory; and already if a man were willing to forego the material advantages of State employment, he was at liberty to riot in what the Church termed schism. In no circumstances is it likely that Nonconformity could ever have been rendered nugatory; but had the Church shown more wisdom it might have been reduced to a minimum. Men are so constructed intellectually that so long as they continue to think they will continue to differ; and the expression of their differences will not assume its least colourable aspect under the influence of a violent spiritual upheaval. It is then that sincerity tends to bigotry and formality stiffens itself by a nicer regard for ceremony, that the sceptic grows bitterly contemptuous, while for the hysterical nothing is too outrageous provided it is only sufficiently incomprehensible. To separate at such a moment the permanent from the evanescent, in other words to be wise before the event, is always a task of supreme difficulty; and probably, in the whole range of religious controversy in this country, there never was a time when prescience was less easy than during the period known as that of the Puritan revival. Just as to the satirist Lucian watching in Pagan Rome the growth of the manifold illusions fostered by Grecian scepticism and Arabian philosophy,

Christianity appeared remarkable merely on account of the simplicity of its delusions; just as to the banqueters in Mahomet's house at Mecca the suggestion of an elderly merchant and a boy of sixteen girding up their loins for the conversion of the world was provocative of nothing except laughter; just as Pope Leo, surrounded by all the art and culture of the Renaissance, could dismiss the theses on the church door at Wittenberg as the drunken frolic of a German friar, so no doubt to the sober Englishmen of the Protectorate, the rant of the Independent, the rhodomontade of the "prophet who damned," and the rhapsodies of the "man in leather breeches," represented nothing but folly varying in degree. Yet, after the lapse of several centuries, while the Ranters have vanished into space, while Muggletonianism, after dragging out a sordid and obscure career, is probably extinct, the Quakers, having enriched humanity by many capable and some eminent citizens, remain a respected if a diminishing body.

The fact of Fox's success is sufficiently plain; the reason of it is by no means equally superficial. There was nothing in his conception which seemed to entail what the devout would have described as an especial blessing; there was, on the contrary, a multitude of tiresome and perplexing detail. Its fundamental principles were as ancient as Christianity itself; its peculiar bulwarks an outrage on human intelligence. If it contained nothing so comically extravagant as the Muggletonian revelation of a transparent deity, it contained much that was sufficiently wild and incoherent to supply Macaulay with an excuse for a famous and characteristic antithesis. England has now grown so familiar

with the decorous life and gentle courtesy of the modern member of the Society of Friends, as to have forgotten that Quakerism in its militant epoch was by no means always either gentle or decorous. The fanaticism which sent George Fox trudging over hill and moor in the belief that he was at once a prophet and a miracle-worker, which urged him to disturb public worship, and drove him barefooted through Lichfield crying aloud, "Woe to this bloody city!" found its inevitable corollary in the madman who rode into Bristol surrounded by disciples shouting, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Israel," and the still madder lady who thrust herself stark naked into church before the Protector, being moved, she declared, to appear as a sign to the people. In all this there was not much calculated to secure the support of any but the most excitable of religious buffoons. It is necessary to look for the secret of the man's influence, and it is to be discovered probably in two simple causes; the magnetism of his personality and his almost superhuman truthfulness. Fox was undoubtedly one of those persons exercising a strange fascination over all who came in contact with them. That, with his neck in the pillory, he should have succeeded in taming the mobs which came to hurl brickbats at him, is not particularly surprising. Mobs are the most uncertain of all unknown quantities, capable one moment of the most brutal ferocity, and the next of mere maudlin sentimentality. That he should have gained and held the respect of such men as Penn and Barclay among his own following, and should have wrung an unwilling compliment from the great Protector himself, is sufficient proof, if any were needed, that he was no mere mountebank. His more questionable antics were probably nothing but the valve through which a strangely impressionable nature found relief in a highly charged atmosphere; and were really insignificant in comparison with the strenuous

fight which, in the face of ruffianism and bigotry, he made for liberty of conscience. Out of the multitude of preachers, some supremely honest, some simply charlatans, whom the religious cyclone had cast up to the surface, he alone, despite all his vapourings and grimaces, seems to have fashioned his pulpit out of the adamant rock of eternal truthfulness. The very extravagance of his attack upon the pleasant courtesies of life, and the pedantry of his objection to such everyday words and phrases as the shallowness of his learning enabled him to select for incorporation in his *index expurgatorius*, are but proof of how an over-wrought brain may reduce even consistency to an absurdity.

But the real work of Fox, the work for which numberless generations have had reason to honour him, was his effort to remove the bonds which men, not content with wrapping them about their own souls, persisted in endeavouring to twist about those of their neighbours. The sad-visaged men, with yokes of names, who prowled from village to hamlet denouncing everything that tended to brighten the struggle for existence, who loathed the Christmas-tree equally with the Maypole, and raged against bear-baiting, not, in Macaulay's famous phrase, because it gave pain to the bear, but because it gave pleasure to the spectators, were as violent as Laud himself in subordinating the cause of truth to their own particular shibboleths. For the moment the Puritan had mastered the Episcopalian, and was intent upon proving that it was possible to be as intolerant in a steeple hat as in a shovelone. Like all religious fanatics Fox was impressed with the fact that he had secured a monopoly of truth; but he held it no part of his revelation to indulge in the punishment of error. He was a proselytiser of course, but it was of the stamp of St. Paul rather than of Saul of Tarsus. No doubt in accordance with the theological bias of the age, he was convinced that those who rejected his

gospel were imperilling their prospects of salvation; but he owned that truth could not be instilled into the weaker brethren either by the physical torture of the boot or by the social coaxing of the Test Act. Whether, if they had ever become the dominant factor in the State, Fox's successors would have lived up to his theories it is impossible to say. Majorities have an ugly habit of ignoring the professions of their minority. The whole history of the world is one long panorama of persecuted turned persecutors. In Rome the primitive Christians were thrown by the Pagans to the lions; when the throne of the Cæsars gave place to the Chair of St. Peter, the Christians chained the heretic to the stake. Protestantism in England, having freed its neck from the yoke of the Papacy, hastened to submit itself to the yoke of Puritanism. Puritanism, in its turn, fleeing to New England from the pillory and the cart-tail, devoted its surplus energy to the branding of Quakers and the hanging of witches. Even the Quakers, who had promised "love" to the Indians under the great elm tree at Shakamaxon, ended by investing their capital in negroes and cow-hides.

Such being the inveterate tendency of human endeavour, it is easily conceivable that the noblest aspirations of Quakerism were best served by the very eccentricities of its conception, which, by militating against its progression, kept its converts in the van of the struggle for religious freedom, instead of by a complete victory putting them in a position to dictate terms to their opponents. How important its accomplishments were, how auspiciously timed its birth, may best be studied in the career of its founder.

George Fox was born in July, 1624, at Drayton-in-the-Clay, Leicestershire. His father, Christopher Fox, was by trade a weaver, one of the old fraternity of workmen who bent over the web in their own cottages, in the days before the flying-shuttle and the powerloom had begun to rear the factory

chimneys along the village street. His mother, Mary Lago, was, he is careful to inform us, "an upright woman, of the stock of the martyrs." Of education, in the modern sense of the word, the boy had none. In an age when a great noble could often with difficulty write a letter and the country gentleman still regarded literature with disdain, the son of a village weaver was scarcely likely to receive any such teaching at all. Books, indeed, were still even rarer than readers. In the whole hamlet, with the exception of the Bible, there was probably not a single volume, unless some ancient folio which in bygone days had been chained to the pillars of the parish church. Something, however, he did learn, in that Leicestershire village, of more importance than all the culture of the Universities, a love of absolute veracity or, as he put it in his Quaker English, "to keep to yea and nay in all things." So that, in days to come, when his quaint "verily" was heard amid the crowd about his goods at the fairs, the purchasers ceased to haggle, for, said they, "if George Fox says 'verily,' there is no altering him." He grew up a sober, dreamy youth, taking little or no part, one would imagine, in the boisterous frolics on the village-green, and exhibiting a rather unnatural contempt for frivolity in his seniors. Such a spirit seemed to mark him out for the priesthood; and a priest his parents had determined upon making him, when other influences were brought to bear, and he was apprenticed instead to a cobbler. What line Fox would have taken if, at the very threshold of his career, he had found himself a representative of the great State Church, is a rather curious speculation. Would he, like many an ardent reformer before him, have bowed to the prejudices of his position and settled down, like the vast majority of the rural clergy, to marry on a miserable pittance the cook of some fox-hunting Tory squire, and preach in a tattered cassock to a

handful of yokels and dairymaids? Or would he, like a Luther or a Wesley, have risen up, and rent the mighty corporation in which he found himself embedded to the roots? The question can never be answered, and is futile enough.

Besides being a maker of shoes Fox's new master was a wool merchant and a grazier. In each capacity Fox served him well and faithfully. Indeed on the very first page of his book there occurs a specimen of that habit of self-appreciation from which the worthy Quaker is never entirely free: "While I was with him," he writes, "he was blest, but after I left him he broke and came to nothing." His period of service cannot, however, have been a very long one. In his nineteenth year one of those trifling occurrences which so frequently dominate a man's whole future caused him to turn his back for ever upon the shoe-lasts and the wool-bales, and to go forth clothed in his garb of leather to preach in the wilderness of unrighteousness.

The immediate cause of his decision was completely unheroic. Chancing at a fair, where he was present upon business, on a couple of acquaintances, he adjourned with them to a neighbouring tavern to share a jug of ale. As soon as his thirst was satisfied Fox proposed to leave; but his friends, calling for more drink, startled him by the suggestion that he who first succumbed should pay the score. To a youth in Fox's state of mental agitation such a proposition sounded little less than demoniacal. Starting up, and throwing a groat upon the board, he shook the dust of the place from off his feet. He reached home in a condition which made rest impossible. All night he paced his room, groaning with agony and calling upon the Lord to rescue him. History teaches us that to a man in such a condition a manifestation of Providence is practically assured. Fox was no exception to the rule. Towards morning the voice of the Almighty

sounded in the little chamber, saying: "Thou seest how young people go together into vanity, and old people into the earth; thou must forsake all, young and old, keep out of all, and be as a stranger unto all." Thus, he writes, "At the command of God, the ninth of the seventh month, 1643, I left my relations, and broke off all familiarity or fellowship with young or old."

He wandered slowly south, avoiding company as much as possible, but seeking help continuously from the priests, whom he found for the most part as "empty casks," and always communing with God, and reviewing his past life, which indeed, rather, one fancies, to his disappointment, seems to have been blameless beyond reproach. The disease followed its usual course. The moment came, while he was at Barnet, when, in common with all men of transcendent spiritual activity, men of such different temperament as St. Anthony and Hugh of Lincoln, he imagined himself tempted of the devil. The struggle was a sore one, though as a matter of fact the devil never seems to have had a chance; and it drove him onwards from his leafy solitude in the chase at Barnet to the vast metropolis hard by.

What Rome had proved to Luther, that London was to Fox. The hoarse roar of the streets jarred upon his already distracted brain; the scenes of vice and misery, inevitable in a great city, filled the country-bred boy with terror. Worn out and homesick, his thoughts naturally turned to his native Leicestershire. He fled from the allurements and wickedness with which he felt himself beset back to his own country and his own people.

It was the summer of Marston Moor, and there was little peace to be found at that moment anywhere in England. The whole conscience of the nation was fermenting like the malt in a brewer's vat. The country was swarming with evangelists; professors Fox dubs them, believing their professions

to be the most important part of them. Sects were cropping up like mushrooms; and, to listen to their various exponents, Christianity might have been founded on hate rather than on love. The Parliamentary army, conceived on the lines of the New Model, had degenerated into something approaching a huge perambulating Little Bethel. Wherever a troop of Ironsides or a file of musketeers appeared, some sour-faced saint, with a name purloined from the Book of Nehemiah, would thrust himself into the parish pulpit and rave against everything that had been taught from it for centuries. The Ranter cursed the Muggletonian; the Muggletonian damned all and sundry; the Independent displayed his affection for freedom by clapping both Ranter and Muggletonian in the Round House. Little wonder if, in the tents of the Malignants, wild devil-may-care spirits of the type of Goring and Lunsford jumbled all Puritans up together as a crew of crop-eared canting hypocrites.

Such a condition of affairs was not likely to calm Fox's nerves. His parents, by this time seriously alarmed for him, would have had him marry and settle down; others of his friends were of opinion that a little roughing it in the ranks would prove beneficial. Both suggestions the lad put sternly aside. He must, he told his mother, "get wisdom" before a wife. As for the idea of carrying a pike it merely filled him with indignation. By this time the devil was again busy with him. His temptations were more than he could bear. He spent whole nights tramping the fields in prayer. At last he again left his father's house and recommenced his wanderings. He made a final effort to find salvation in the Established Church, plodding from vicarage to vicarage, and laying bare his heart to the incumbents. The results, comical enough to us, must have been near death to him. One parson listened to all he had to say, plied him with numerous questions, and made use of the answers to embellish his next Sunday's sermon.

Another, noticing that in the heat of his confidences he mistook the flower-beds for the garden-path, drove him away with a torrent of abuse. A third advised him to smoke and sing psalms, and when his back was turned made fun of him to the dairymaids. Finally, one old gentleman, who evidently could not comprehend any one save a lunatic being in trouble about his soul, insisted upon physicking and bleeding him. But it was the boy's mind, not his stomach, that was disordered; no number of incisions could draw a drop of blood from his veins. Despairing of human aid he fell back once more upon the divine command that he should withdraw himself entirely from the world. He prayed and fasted continually; he passed whole days hidden in hollow trees, and whole nights with no other roof over him than the sky. Suddenly, when the darkness seemed most blinding, a way was opened for him into light. One morning, as he was walking towards Coventry, it was revealed to him that a university education was not in itself sufficient to qualify a man for the ministry. Henceforth his contempt for the Establishment was supreme.

The gravity and insistence with which Fox dwells upon so extraordinarily natural a conclusion compel the inference that it was the first link in that chain of reasoning by which, in years to come, his soul swung safely at anchor amidst "the raging waves, foul weather, tempests, and temptations" which compose the ocean of doubt. From that moment he became less of a recluse, and wandered about the neighbouring country in search of "tender" people. This time he gave the Church a wide berth, and passed more among Dissenters, who, in the end, do not appear to have impressed him much more favourably. He stumbled across some of the many erratic developments in which the mental activity of the day was exploding itself. In the vale of Belvoir he fell in with a little body

of Pantheists among whom he made some converts. He was even more successful with a people who relied for guidance upon the interpretation of dreams. But he was routed by some atrabilious misogynists who held that no woman possessed a soul, no more, they assured him, than a goose. Later on, in their prison at Coventry, he had his first encounter with the Ranters, and was shocked and dazed by the blasphemy which led them to proclaim that they were God.

By this time Fox was fairly embarked upon his career as a reformer. The devil, it is true, still continued to plague him, but the old feeling of terror was fast giving place to one of ecstasy. Towards the close of 1647 one Brown, being on his death-bed, had visions of him, and prophesied that he would prove the chosen instrument of the Lord. Immediately his carnal body underwent a species of transfiguration. His countenance and person, he declares, were changed as if they had been new moulded. Henceforth, instead of hiding in trees, he stood forth to combat unrighteousness. In the town-meetings of the Dissenters, in the gatherings by the hedgerows and in the fields, at the boards of magistracy, even in the aisles of the churches at the close of divine service, his voice was heard proclaiming his gospel of justice and perfection. The result of his eloquence not infrequently took the course he had taught himself to expect; and after a great meeting at Mansfield, the house in which he had prayed was shaken like the chamber of the Apostles at Jerusalem. At length, in the beginning of 1648, the Lord spoke to him again, and commanded him to go out into the world to preach repentance unto men.

Hitherto Fox's troubles had arisen entirely from his own spiritual activity. He was now to experience persecution at the hands of others. His disciples, known in those days as the Children of Light, were rapidly increasing; and were beginning to

attract attention as much by the quaintness as by the earnestness of their proceedings. Their grand method of attack lay in attending at the churches (steeple-houses as they preferred to denominate them, in distinction to the primitive meaning of church as a congregation) in order, by disputing with the parson, to convince his flock of error. As a result they had been denounced as mere brawlers in sacred places; and people who read history without appreciating the variation of custom with succeeding ages, have honestly come to regard them as such. In point of fact nothing could be further from the truth. The law of the seventeenth century distinctly authorised a person at the close of the sermon to enter into discussion with the priest. It was this right of which Fox availed himself; and to call him and his followers brawlers, because on exceptional occasions they were so carried away as to interrupt the service before the appointed time, is absurd and unjust. Had Fox had behind him the long swords of the Independent troopers, who made little of ejecting the minister bodily from his pulpit, no doubt he might have acted with impunity. But having no more material support than the prayers of a few poor men, who had accepted literally the gospel-teaching, "Whosoever smite thee on thy right cheek turn to him the other also," the very first time his feeling overcame him (it was in a church at Nottingham, where "all the people seemed as fallow ground"), he found himself seized by the constable, and cast incontinently into "a nasty, stinking prison."

The days passed in that prison were the prelude to many months of confinement. Wandering, as he necessarily did, up and down the country, he made during the next thirty years the acquaintance of most of the gaols between Bodmin and Carlisle. What he, a prisoner for conscience' sake, suffered in that time, starved by one gaoler, cudgelled by another, denied the common decencies of life, and im-

mured with the vilest scum of the criminal population, must to a great extent be imagined. In the whole of his wonderful journal there is an absence of acidity and a dignity of diction that disguises the worst horrors of prison life in the seventeenth century. Sometimes his patience overcame the passions of his captors. At Nottingham he made such an impression on the sheriff, that the good man (his name was Reckless) rushed from his house in his slippers to preach repentance in the market-place. One night at Derby the prison-keeper burst into his cell, crying, "I have been as a lion against you, but now I come like a lamb, and like the gaoler that came to Paul and Silas trembling." These, it must be admitted, were the exceptions. For the most part the men remained, after their kind, brutal. Sometimes, however, Fox obtained a victory which, it is to be feared, he was sufficiently human to enjoy. As when he put the fear of God into the lame wife of the gaoler at Leicester who was wont to beat her husband with her crutch; or, as in the case of a young fellow, one Hunter of Lancaster, who, being ordered to convey him on horseback to Scarborough Castle, whiled away the time by lashing the quadruped till the rider nearly tumbled off, crying out all the time, "How do you do, Mr. Fox?" "I told him," says Fox, meekly, "it was not civil in him to do so;" then, very drily, "Soon after the Lord cut him off."

The imprisonment at Nottingham had the usual result of such methods. Fox left the gaol convinced more than ever that he was the chosen vessel of the Lord, and even that power had been granted him to heal the sick and cast out devils. Coming to Mansfield Woodhouse he heard of a "distracted woman" whom the doctors could not even so much as succeed in bleeding. The poor creature was probably in the same state of mental excitement as Fox himself, when the lancet and boluses of

Parson Macham refused to act on him; but he was confident that the devil, and not hysteria, was the root of the complaint. Entering the house, he told the keepers to unbind her, and then in the name of the Lord bade her be still. Whereupon, whether from astonishment or relief, she actually became so, and shortly after received the truth. The cure was not a singular one. Many, Fox assures us, were made whole in those days, more than the "unbelieving age was able to receive." The people of Mansfield Woodhouse were, however, of the scoffers. Catching the miracle-worker in the street, they half murdered him and stoned him out of the place. But Fox was not to be terrified by brickbats. Learning at Twy Cross that there was a man given over by the physicians, he at once ascended to the death-chamber and "spake the word of life" over him that was sick, so that he at once began to mend. In this instance it is extremely probable that Fox was a better doctor than he knew. In an age when the lancet was the be-all and the end-all of the village practitioner, when live lice were considered a sovereign remedy for ague, and powders scraped from mummies were the joy of such as could afford them, anything so wholesome as the prayers of a good man may well have proved efficacious. Fox, however, did not look at it in that light. Strong in his sense of election, he pressed upon his way, and came to Derby.

His reputation had preceded him. The dissenting ministers and the clergy of the Establishment, alike jealous of their authority, were determined upon suppressing him. At his very first attempt to speak in public the constables were called in, and he was hauled before the magistrates. Then followed one of those curious scenes which were enacted whenever he appeared in the dock. Called upon to account for his presence in the town, he replied that it was at the command of God, and bade them

tremble at His word. The answer so irritated one of the justices named Bennet, that he retaliated with the term Quaker, a word which, muttered in anger, quickly became historical. But Fox was equal to the occasion. Falling upon his knees he began to pray aloud for the offender. This so maddened Bennet that he sprang from his seat and, running across the court-house, struck him where he knelt. Having thus established their respect for law, the Bench proceeded to commit the prisoner for blasphemy. There was, however, considerably more force in the blow than in the charge. And the magistrates, having got him in prison, seem to have become sensible of their error. They accordingly found means to approach him with a view to conniving at his escape. But they had mistaken their man. Fox, who afterwards declined a pardon from the King for an offence of which he had held himself innocent, was not likely to be guilty of playing into the hands of so shallow a creature as Bennet. In the prison therefore he remained until the moment of the battle of Worcester, when, the Parliament being in want of men, the justices be-thought them of a new idea, and sending for him tendered him press-money, and would have made him a soldier. The action of course was persecution in its most naked form, but Fox's refusal supplied an apparently legal excuse for a further term of imprisonment. How long the game would have gone on it is impossible to say. There were those who thought that it was the intention of the Powers to make an end of him; a result which in the days of prison fever might not have been long delayed. Fox, however, was under no such apprehension. He was perfectly satisfied that he was the special care of the Almighty, and that in the appointed season all would be well. Accordingly he calmly announces that, towards the close of 1651, it pleased God to visit the town with a pestilence, which so alarmed

his persecutors that they threw open the doors of his prison. He had been in gaol just on twelve months.

For the next few years he roamed about the northern counties, adding to the numbers and stirring up the zeal of his followers. It was a time of fearful hardship endured with singular fortitude and gentleness. Hounded by ministers of all denominations who feared comparison with his saintliness; stoned and beaten by savage mobs; mocked even by the little children taught to jeer at the man in leather breeches; sometimes in prison, never knowing a home; driven from door to door, and refused even food or shelter; sleeping in winter in the deep snow in the fields, and in summer fainting from heat and exhaustion, forced to lap the green water in the ditches, but never faltering, never murmuring, never doubting, he held on his way. Until at last, one grey morning in 1654, torn overnight by the Ironsides from a Friends' meeting at Whetstone, he knelt by the bedside of Hacker, the regicide, in Leicester, and learned that he was to be sent to London, charged with plotting against the Protector.

Early one morning, a few weeks later, Fox presented himself under escort at Whitehall. The Protector was not yet giving audience, but the prisoner was permitted to ascend to his apartments. He found Cromwell partially dressed, and, having saluted him with the words, "Peace be to this house," planted himself before him and plunged straightway into an exhortation upon godly living. Cromwell listened to him patiently, drew him on to speak of general religious topics, and then, brushing aside all theological difference, asked him point blank why he must be always quarrelling with the ministers. The question, coming from the man who, with his hat on his head and his Ironsides at his heels, had stalked up the nave at Ely and roughly bidden the Rev. Mr. Hitch to "Leave off that fooling and come down," was a curious

one and touched Fox to the quick. Ever since he had had it opened to him that the universities were not the royal road to heaven, his contempt for their graduates had been gathering force. He launched out into a violent attack upon the whole brood, men he declared who "preached for filthy lucre, and for hire, who divined for money, and were covetous and greedy." Then, noticing that the room was filling with people, he ceased suddenly, and stood back. As he did so Cromwell sprang up and seized his hand: "Come again to my house," he cried, "for if thou and I were but an hour a day together, we should be nearer one to the other." Thus they parted, and as he descended the stairs he learned that it was Cromwell's wish that he should dine in the great hall with the household. Sternly and somewhat surlily, he declined. "Let the Protector know," said he, "that I will not eat of his meat or drink of his drink." The reply raised him even higher in Cromwell's estimation. "Now," cried he, in a sentence which showed how much in accord he was with Fox's strictures on the ministers, "now I see that there is a people risen that I cannot win either with gifts, honours, offices, or places; but all other sects and people I can."

The two men met occasionally after that. One day Fox, riding into town from Kingston, caught sight of Cromwell's coach near Hyde Park, and pushed towards it. The guards would have driven him back, but the Protector recognised him, and shouted to them to let him pass. The two men talked together earnestly till they reached St. James's, when they parted with a promise from Fox to attend next day at Whitehall. "I can give you good news," laughed the Protector to one of his wife's maids as he entered the Palace; "Mr. Fox is come to town." When they met next day the stern old warrior was in one of those playful moods into which, as troubles thickened about him, he less and less frequently lapsed. Seated

carelessly upon the edge of a table he bantered the Quaker unceasingly, and dismissed him with the laughing, but extremely true reflection that his self-satisfaction was by no means the least part of him. A year or so later Fox saw him for the last time. He met him riding into Hampton. "Before I came to him," he writes, "as he rode at the head of his Life Guards, I saw and felt a waft of death go forth against him." A few nights later, while a terrific storm was raging over London, the strong spirit passed away. Fox had lost a sincere and a powerful friend.

It was during this residence of Fox in London that he became involved in that extraordinary controversy with regard to which he is so eloquently silent in his journal. While he had been tramping the moors and climbing the hills of Yorkshire and of Cumberland, a half-mad tailor, by name Ludowick Muggleton, had been haunting the taverns and alleys about Old St. Paul's, proclaiming a revelation evolved partly from a study of the mystical effusions of those quaint dreamers Jacob Böhme and Hans Eckhart, and partly from his own crazy brain. The universe, he roundly declared, was governed by a deity transparent as crystal and in height just six feet, whose viceregent upon earth he, Ludowick, was. Like all the popular theologians of the day, to whom Fox was so markedly opposed, he relied for proselytism upon the reality of the flames of hell. Indeed, he naively admitted that his own conversion was wrought, not so much by a desire to be saved, as because he was not minded to be damned. The apostleship of such as chose to seek him out he accepted without emotion; the strictures of such as dared to differ from him he met with lavish sentences of damnation. That such colossal folly should have survived in a concrete form down to our own times is remarkable enough; that it at one time should have assumed so serious a complexion as to threaten the very existence of

Quakerism, is perhaps more remarkable still. The leaders of the Ranters had already capitulated unconditionally to Muggleton, when the defection of some weaker Friends warned Fox that the struggle could no longer be avoided. A great debate was held at a hall in Eastcheap and, whoever had the best of the argument, Fox had the worst of the vote. Muggleton left the meeting in triumph, having publicly pronounced sentence of damnation on Fox. Thenceforth he never showed for his opponents anything except the cool contempt of assured mastery. Fox however was not to be disposed of by mere vapouring. He was fashioned in a very different clay from the lunatics and tipplers whom Muggleton had so often frightened into their graves. He continued the contest through the medium of pamphlets with a bitterness suspiciously akin to weakness, and only retired from it when he found, in Penn and Farnsworth, men even better equal to cope with the multitudinous vituperation of his rival, men who certainly did not apply the doctrine of non-resistance to their polemical writings, but who gave back curse for curse with astonishing fecundity.

The incident is one on which, for obvious reasons, Fox's extreme admirers have preferred to keep silence. And indeed it is pleasant to turn from the sordid squabble, and to follow him out from the hum and roar of London streets upon his crusade against the flesh and the devil; to watch his exertions for getting the children of the street taught trades; to listen to his voice, two full centuries before its time, denouncing the ferocity of the penal code; and to hear him pleading with Parliament and with King for complete religious toleration. In London he had been under the protection of Cromwell; in the west country he had to deal with Desborough, a person with no poetry in his composition. Brought up before the Lord Chief Justice, he declined to remove his hat, on the grounds that to make obeisance to man was against

the law of God and the constitution of the country. "Come," cried the Judge, "where had they hats from Moses to Daniel? Come, answer me; I have you fast now." "The three children," returned Fox, "were cast into the fiery furnace with their hats on." He was promptly committed to Launceston gaol for contempt. His gaoler was a thief branded in the hand; his cell a hole in the old keep, two inches deep in oozing slime, so noisome that he was forced to burn the straw thrown to him as bedding, to avoid being poisoned. At the end of nine weeks he was released, still contumacious. Little wonder that Hugh Peters told Cromwell that if the Government wished to convert England to Quakerism, they were going the way to do it.

Fox's first act on his release was to preach defiantly in the streets of Launceston. Then he set out to visit the Friends throughout the country. He rode by Exeter to Bristol, and crossing the Severn came to Cardiff. For weeks, attended by one faithful follower, John ap John, he wandered among the Welsh hills, enduring incredible privation and often barely escaping with his life. Pressing steadily north he reached Liverpool, whose miles of docks and forests of chimneys were then represented by a little sea-port of four thousand souls. Passing through Manchester, whose warehouses were already filling with the cotton bales of Smyrna, he entered Cumberland, the scene of his earlier struggle with that potent sheriff Wilfred Lawson. From whence, taking with him one Robert Widders, "a thundering man against hypocrisy and deceit," he climbed through the Cheviots into Scotland. Upon Scotland Fox seems to have made no impression whatever. He was not persecuted; he was simply ignored. The Council, it is true, at last ordered him to cross the border within seven days, but they appear to have permitted him to construe the seven pretty elastically. The people, still

under the spell of the hideous eschatology of Knox and Calvin, were little in the humour to listen to the doctrine of perfection. At Stirling the townsfolk attended a horse-race in preference to his sermon. In the whole great city of Glasgow he could not muster an audience of one. Even in Edinburgh, where the Lord blinded the sentries to enable him to pass the gates, he was only indifferently successful. At Johnstone he was seized gently but firmly, and put across the river. It was in vain that on market-days he took his stand beneath the village cross; the populace took no notice of him, not so much as to throw a carrot at him. Still there were times when his earnestness thawed the frost of his unwilling listeners, and the deep northern nature answered back in unexpected sympathy. These, however, were the exceptions. The Scotch, he declares, "being a dark and carnal people, gave little heed; but the husbandman is to wait in patience." Comforted with that he crossed the Tweed at Berwick, and rode south again.

Fox arrived in London during the last days of the Protectorate. He was there when Thomas Aldam, despairing at Cromwell's indifference to the persecution of the Friends, took off his cap at Whitehall and, having rent it in pieces in the approved biblical manner, cast the pieces at the Protector's feet, with the words, "So shall thy Government be rent from thee and thy house." No doubt Fox honestly believed that the prophecy was fulfilled in the Restoration, just as Muggleton, after having admonished one of his disciples for taking upon himself to damn a dozen odd scoffers, remarked parenthetically, "Not but that I do believe they will all be damned." A habit of noting only the results which fit is an indiscretion common to all fanatics. Fox himself never omits to add to the tale of those who, like "Old Preston's wife," came to an untimely end after making light of him.

At the same time, if the sum of those who jeered and were cut off could be deducted from the sum of those who jeered with impunity, the death-rate would probably be found to have remained stationary. The Quakers, however, gained little by Monk's action. If the oath of abjuration, in the hands of the Commonwealth judges, had proved a whip, the oath of supremacy, in the hands of those of the King, quickly developed into a scorpion. If he taunted them with their subserviency to the Protector, they tendered him the oath; if he claimed the protection of the Declaration of Breda, they tendered him the oath; even when he had walked straight through the flaws of the indictment, they fell back on the oath. "You shall have the law," cried one of them furiously, when he had been beaten hopelessly in open court at his own trade. "You are acquitted on the charge. Now tender him the oath." It was in vain he protested unceasingly against being ordered to swear on a book that forbade swearing. The judges remained obdurate; and he continued to make the tour of the country gaols with increasing velocity.

When the King had been some nine years upon the throne Fox determined to visit the Friends in Ireland. At the first blush there is something almost comical at the idea of an Irishman in Quaker habiliments. Those, however, to whom Fox turned were not so much the Celtic Catholics as the Presbyterian Planters of the Pale. Sailing from Liverpool he landed at Dublin, where "the earth and air smelt," he thought, "with the corruption of the nation." His first act was characteristic. He issued a challenge to all the priests to public disputation. The years following the storm of Drogheda were, however, not the time at which one would naturally have expected to find Rome active. No answers, save a few savage mutterings, came to his proposal; and he was able to take a bloodless triumph

in a document in which he compared them disadvantageously with the priests of Baal, who indeed "tried their wooden god," while the Catholics dare venture nothing with theirs of bread and wine. The Presbyterians, however, proved of tougher fibre. The Mayor of Cork put the soldiers on his track; and it was with considerable difficulty that he was able to hold the meetings which he declares were abundantly blessed. After a short stay he returned to Dublin, whence he sailed amidst the enthusiasm of the Friends, who followed him to sea in their little boats, "at least a league, though not without danger."

The year of Fox's return to England is memorable as the date of the solitary action of his career in which he seems to have considered his personal feelings. Seventeen years previously he had made the acquaintance, in the Lake country, of Judge Fell and his wife Margaret. They had been among his earliest converts and had stood nobly by him in the storm of obloquy and persecution which had then threatened to overwhelm him. Upon the death of her husband, which occurred shortly after, Margaret had thrown herself actively into the work of propagation, and had bravely borne her load of imprisonment and revilement. She had stood upon more than one occasion between Fox and his tormentors, and it was to her personal intercession with the King that the Quakers owed such little freedom as they had. If something warmer than friendship had not grown up between the two it would have been strange. Their marriage, which took place now in Bristol, was the product of many years of comradeship in trial. It was one on both sides of purest affection; and Fox's letters to his "dear heart," though they are neither numerous nor lengthy, strike a new note of tenderness. But their happiness was not long undisturbed; within a few weeks they were both prisoners

in distant gaols for conscience' sake.

By this time the Quakers were beginning to push their peculiar tenets beyond their native shores. They had overrun Holland, that ancient home of religious freedom; they were settlers in the great trading cities of the north German seaboard; they lay in the dungeons of the Inquisition at Malta, and were seen in the bazaars of Alexandria; they were to be found on the plantations of the West Indian Islands, and upon the clearances of the North American colonies; and they even talked of carrying the truth to the mandarins of Canton. Fox was no longer young; the terrible hardships he had endured had made him prematurely old; but with indomitable courage he determined to cross the seas to take his part in the crusade.

On the 13th of June, 1671, he sailed from Gravesend aboard the *Industry*. The same evening they hove to off Deal to land the friends of the passengers, among them Fox's wife. The voyage proved anything but a pleasure-party. The vessel took eight inches of water an hour, and from the start the passengers were forced to join the crew at the pumps; three weeks out from London they were chased by a Sallee pirate, and only avoided capture owing to a dark night and a fresh gale. At last, after a voyage of just under two months, they made Barbadoes, and dropped anchor in Carlisle Bay. Three months later they again took ship and after touching at Jamaica, landed in Maryland. Fox remained in America a little over two years. During that time, though in the weakest health, he managed to make his way through the miles of forest and prairie that hedged round the English colonies from Carolina to Rhode Island. The spasm of persecution which had driven Williams out of the Bay State, and built the gallows of the Salem witches, had spent itself. Fox was received everywhere with kindness and with

affection; even the negroes and the Indians listened to him with attention and respect. One could wish that he had spoken out with all the might that was in him against the growing curse of slavery; had he done so he might have saved his cause in America from the stain of an indelible disgrace. As it was, he contented himself with pleading for a more humane and generous regime, with the result that when King Cotton raised his ugly head the Quakers marched hand in hand with their neighbours into the abyss. In March, 1673, he sailed from Pattuxen and landed after a rough but favourable voyage at Bristol.

For thirteen years after his return from America Fox lived to labour in the vineyard. To tell the story of that time would be but to traverse the old ground again. To the last he never had a home: he spent his days wandering from city to hamlet and from shore to shore upon his Master's business; twice he visited Holland and the North German seaboard; at times he still found himself in the dock and in the gaol, though the persecution in its more spiteful phase had died with Charles, for James, in his desperate effort to win England for the Pope, made a useless bid for the support of the Quakers. In his sixty-sixth year, though very feeble, he threw himself heart and soul into the great battle for toleration; and crawled down day after day from his lodgings to Westminster Hall, to argue with the members in favour of making the act "comprehensive and effectual."

The end was now in sight. The long days in the saddle, the nights spent under the open sky in rain and snow, the months of weary lingering in fetid prisons, had broken his once

magnificent constitution. On the 11th of November, 1690, he preached for the last time with more than wonted fire and directness in the old meeting-house in Gracechurch Street. As he came out he complained that he felt the cold strike at his heart. He went home and lay down never to rise again. "All is well, though I am weak in body," he said to the Friends who gathered about his bed-side; "yet the power of the Lord is over all, and over death itself." Two days later he passed away in perfect peace and contentment. He was laid to rest in the Friends' burial-ground near Bunhill Fields.

The exact position of his grave has long since been forgotten, though a modern stone marks its conjectured site. As a memorial that plain slab is amply sufficient; anything more costly one feels would be incongruous. His true monument is the labours, for two centuries, of Quaker men and women; in the figure of Penn carrying through the American continent the fiery cross of complete toleration, in the story of the devoted labours of Elizabeth Fry, and in the echo of the stately eloquence of Bright. It may be said that Fox's successors were greater than himself; and no doubt they possessed gifts, as they possessed opportunities, which were denied to him; but they could not one of them have done his work. Carlyle could find for him, in all history, but one peer, the philosopher Diogenes. "Great, truly, was that Tub; a temple from which man's dignity and divinity were scornfully preached abroad: but greater is the Leather Hull, for the same sermon was preached there, and not in Scorn but in Love."

A CHAPTER ON RED COATS.

WERE any living thinker to be seized with a desire to write a new Philosophy of Clothes, he would probably find himself constrained (whatever his prejudices) to admit that the most remarkable of all modern garments is the red coat of the British soldier. Without undue arrogance it may probably be described as on the whole the most widely known of all articles of clothing throughout the world. For in truth it has travelled far. It has shown itself at one time or another in almost every country of Europe: it has invaded Africa from north, south, east and west; it has established itself in India and the Malay Peninsula, and flaunted itself in China and Japan; it has visited North America, Central America, South America, and almost every island of the Caribbean Sea; it has overrun most of New Zealand, left its mark in Australia and called, if no more, at very many of the North Pacific Islands. Truly a remarkable coat, equalled probably only by the famous blue jacket. But the blue does not strike the eye like the scarlet; it is rather the colour of all naval services than of the British Navy. Blue jackets may salute any flag hoisted on newly-annexed territory; it is only the Union Jack which receives the salute of red-coated marines. Can we doubt which colour impresses itself most upon the untutored savage mind?

Yet if asked what was the origin of the red coats, we find it extraordinarily difficult to supply an answer. The commonest explanation is that scarlet is the royal colour of England, being the tincture of the Royal Coat of Arms. But this, though recently expounded by an officer of the Grenadier Guards in the Brigade of Guard's Magazine, can easily be proved in-
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correct. Again, even if it can be proved that the body-guards of Henry the Eighth and of Elizabeth wore scarlet, this is no evidence that the modern red coats have come down in direct lineal descent, so to speak, from those times. As a matter of fact the idea of a uniform dress and colour for an entire host, as apart from an individual corps or regiment, marks a distinct stage in the evolution of an army. Where does one ever see the word "uniform" in the histories of the wars of three centuries or even two centuries back? Nowhere; for the very simple reason that uniformity, as we now understand it, was not yet thought of.¹ Such uniformity in dress and equipment necessarily entails some prescribed pattern. The old English militia, as it existed before the Civil War, was not furnished even with arms, much less with clothing. Every man was expected to find his own weapons; and so far as can be gathered, not one man in three in this respect fulfilled what was expected of him.²

All this however was changed by the Great Civil War, which is the time from which the birth of the British Army and of the red coats should really be dated. Not that either of these great institutions sprang suddenly and immediately into existence; three years of incubation were necessary first. At the outbreak of the war both armies were compounded of many elements and clad in many colours. Commissions were given to men of mark or means to raise troops,

¹ It is curious to remark that the old expression "regimentals," so common in the fiction of the beginning of this century, now survives only in the descriptions of the Police Gazette.

² Ward's "Animadversions of Warre;" ed. 1639.

companies, and regiments; and then corps were organised according to the capacity or incapacity of individual officers, and equipped according to their fancy or the length of their purses. The result was that, somewhat like our present Volunteers when they were first called into existence, the various corps were dressed in every colour of the rainbow. On the King's side we hear among others of Newcastle's White-Coats (undyed wool, to be coloured only by the blood of the enemy), Byron's Blacks, Sir Ralph Hopton's Yellow Regiment, somebody else's Green Regiment; and lastly the King's Red Regiment, as to which there will presently be something more to say. On the Parliamentary side the variety was equally great. The six regiments of the London Train-Bands were known as the Yellow, Blue, White, Red, Green, and Orange; there were the Red and the Blue auxiliaries, and the White auxiliaries of Southwark and the Tower Hamlets; Sir Arthur Heselrigge's Blue-Coats, and last, but not least, Colonel Cromwell's Tawnies, better known to us as the Ironsides. Thus we see that colour was everything in the matter of the distinction of regiment from regiment. Two Parliamentary corps, moreover, had peculiar designations. The first has a decidedly familiar sound,—Sir Arthur Heselrigge's Lobsters. These men, however, owed the name not to the colour of their coats, but to the hardness of their shells; for they were clad in complete armour, and being quite unique (so we are told) in England at that time created a great sensation. Men so equipped were called on the Continent by the name of cuirassiers. The other corps to which I have alluded was Sir John Meldrum's Red-shanks in the North Country, a vague term which I am inclined to interpret in a sansculottic sense as signifying that the men were kilted.

It can easily be imagined that the identity of colours in both armies led

to considerable difficulty in distinguishing friend from foe, more especially as those colours were often to a great extent hidden by buff coats and defensive armour. This difficulty was overcome by giving scarves of uniform colour to the men, to be worn over all. Sometimes these scarves served their purpose only too well. At Edgehill, for instance, there was present a certain Sir Faithful Fortescue, who shortly before the outbreak of the war had received a commission from the King to raise a troop of horse for service in Ireland. Having raised it he found himself and his men, not a little to his disgust, forcibly impressed by the Parliament to fight against the King. Not unnaturally he seized his opportunity at Edgehill of going over to his own side; but his men foolishly forgot to throw off their orange scarves, and were therefore roughly handled by the Royal Horse before the mistake was discovered. But notwithstanding the use of distinctive scarves, and the world-old practice of giving out a battle-cry, it is clear that the difficulty of distinguishing friend from foe frequently led to confusion and to awkward mistakes. We have Cromwell's own testimony that "diversity of clothing" in the Parliamentary army had led to the "slaying of friends by friends."

When therefore in the autumn of 1644 the Parliament decided to reorganise the army, or rather to create a real army in place of a motley assembly of troops and companies, it decided, at whose motion we know not, to dress it in one colour. And as the New Model Army created by the Ordinance of 15th February, 1644-45 is the true germ of our present army, so its dress is the true germ of our present uniform. "The men are all Redcoats *all the whole army*, only are distinguished by the several facings of their coats. The Firelocks [who were attached to the train of Artillery] only are some of them tawny coats." So wrote a cor-

respondent to the newspapers¹ after a visit to Fairfax's army in April, 1645. Thus the first British army clothed in the royal scarlet was a rebel army; the first regiment of Horse (the Ironsides reorganised) and of Foot wore scarlet with blue facings,² which is the present mark of a "royal" regiment; and to put the finishing touch on the picture, the new clothing was served out under the shadow of royal Windsor. Finally the first action of this first army of Red-Coats was against the King in person at Naseby; though even there, not content with distinction of dress, the Royalists "wore beans in their hats" and the Parliamentarians "handkerchiefs or something white."

But now comes the puzzling question, why was red chosen for the Parliamentary colour? Red must have been the royal colour, for the King's Red Regiment was the King's Foot-Guard—the gallant corps which stood at Edgehill till it was cut to pieces, thereby making an example for all British Foot-Guards. Moreover we are certainly not accustomed to conceive of the Puritans as addicted to gay colours. Whence then came the scarlet? A note in the Squire Papers hints that red was the colour of the Eastern Association troops; and this, so far as it goes, is accurate; for there is still extant the Order of the Committee of both Kingdoms respecting the Essex men recruited for the New Model Army, that "they be commodiously provided (as hath formerly been practised) with 1,000 red coats faced with blue."³ But even so we are little the wiser as to the real origin of the scarlet. For it is not clear why the troops of the Eastern Association, for all the good service they had done, should have given the pattern for the whole army;

and even if it were, we are quite in the dark as to the ground of its predilection for that particular colour. So having pursued the scarlet, so to speak, from the elephant to the tortoise, we are forced to leave the tortoise reposing in space. One thing, however, seems to be certain, that the scarlet was not Cromwell's colour; for later on, when he became Protector, he dressed his bodyguard in "grey cloaks with black velvet collars and black velvet and silver lace," most orthodox Puritan hues.

How the army at large liked its new clothing we do not know; but we do know that one troop of a certain famous corps made difficulties about wearing a red coat. Indeed in the winter months of 1644-5 the Ironsides from one cause or another,—perhaps from the prospect of losing their old Colonel and being handed over to Fairfax—seem to have been in rather a restless state. There were some (we learn) in Lieutenant-General Cromwell's regiment whose "opinions were against fighting in any cause whatever," and whose scruples were solemnly considered by the Committee of both Kingdoms.¹ The difficulty of the coat was dealt with by Cromwell himself in the most characteristic of all his letters.

TO MR. RUSSELL.²

SIR,—I hear your troops refuse the new coats. Say this:—Wear them or go home. I stand no nonsense from any one. It is a needful thing we be as one in colour, much ill having been from diversity of clothing, to slaying of friends by friends. Sir, I pray you heed this.

OLIVER CROMWELL.

From the year 1645 it may be said that Red-Coat and soldier became convertible terms in England. Within five years of its establishment the colour was to earn its title of "England's cruel red"; for it is beyond

¹ "Perfect Passages," 30th April, 1645; in King's Pamphlets, Brit. Museum.

² Fairfax's colours were blue, and he was Colonel of both regiments.

³ Cal. of State Papers; Record Office.

¹ See minutes of their proceedings, 20th Jan. 1644-5; Record Office.

² Undated. Carlyle conjectures it to have been written in 1643. I should be disposed to correct this to the winter of 1644-5.

question certain that Cromwell's troops which reduced the Irish rebellion wore red coats. "Cassocks" is the name given to the garments in the official records,¹ of "Venice-colour red, shrunk in water": fifteen thousand of them at a cost of seventeen shillings apiece, and fifteen thousand pairs of breeches "of grey or other good colour"; eight thousand yards of cloth "for cloaks for the army in Ireland, ten thousand hats and bands." What a cold, hard sound there is about these preparations for the terrible Irish campaign. Having thus early crossed St. George's Channel, the Red-coats had next to make themselves supreme in Scotland, which, after great difficulty, they successfully accomplished at Dunbar on September 3rd, 1650. On Christmas Day of the same year Red-Coats garrisoned for the first time the three capitals, London, Edinburgh, and Dublin. Then came one more battle on English soil (fought at Worcester, September 3rd, 1651), and the Civil War was over.

Then the Red-Coat, for the first and only time in English history, fairly ousted the long robe and took charge of the government of the three kingdoms. Nor need any modern wearer of the scarlet feel the least ashamed of the three soldiers, Oliver Cromwell in England, Henry Cromwell in Ireland, and George Monk in Scotland, who ruled these islands at that time; for beyond question they were remarkably able administrators. But unfortunately the English, being, as Mr. Gladstone says, an undisciplined race,² did not appreciate the advantages of military government, even when it saved them from "sansculottism coming uppermost," to use Carlyle's phrase, and from a possible Reign of Terror. Moreover, it was in the nature of things that a reaction against the

military spirit should set in so soon as peace was restored. For it is not too much to say that in the decade 1642-52 the English nation, hitherto neglectful and careless of military matters, went mad about soldiering. Military figures and metaphors found their way into the language and literature of the day, and showed themselves in no writings more strikingly than in those of John Milton, while learned divines borrowed the phrases of the parade-ground for the titles of their discourses.¹ Again, if anything like a review or sham fight were going forward, the people came in crowds to see it; nay, one astute Colonel, Blunt by name, took advantage of the general feeling to reconcile the people to the prohibition of the MayDay sports. On May 1st, 1645, according to the newspapers, he drew out his two regiments on Blackheath and had a sham fight of Cavaliers and Roundheads, wherein both sides played their parts with great spirit, and the Cavaliers were of course duly defeated. This edifying spectacle, if we are to believe our authority, "satisfied the people as well as if they had gone Maying any other way."² It was perhaps a pity that this spirit could not have endured a little longer, but it was not to be. The English people had fought against itself for ten years, had beheaded a king and abolished the kingly office; it had subdued Scotland and Ireland and swept the Dutch fleet off the sea; and still the long-desired millennium was not come. Why was it, the people asked? And the rebellious, the conservative, the fanatical, the discontented, the doctrinaire, answered with one voice, "Oliver Cromwell."

So the tone of England towards the army was changed; and instead of lauding to the skies, as heretofore, "the General and his brave soldiers," a hundred sheets and tracts raved against "the Tyrant and his Red-Coats." And

¹ Cal. of State Papers; Interregnum III. 343.

² Note however that the three disciplinarians aforesaid were "pure English"; the Cromwells from Huntingdonshire, Monk from Devonshire.

¹ "As You Were," a sermon, &c. King's Pamphlets, Brit. Museum.

² Newspapers in King's Pamphlets, sub dat.; Brit. Museum.

thus the name of the Red-Coats began to be a by-word, from which not even their brilliant exploits on the Continent (in the Dunkirk expedition of 1657-8) had power to redeem them. Now when a coat earns a bad reputation, its very existence is imperilled. Let no one think lightly of coats and their colour, for they are very serious matters. Think if the Irish Constabulary had been clothed in scarlet or blue; should we ever have heard the end of the abusive nicknames heaped on the force for their coats' sake? Yet Irishmen, amid all their complaints against English neglect of their national sentiment, never think of the masterpiece of tact which clothed the Irish police in green. So when Oliver Cromwell died, it must have seemed at least doubtful whether the unpopular Red-Coats would survive the Restoration; and indeed, that they should have managed to survive it is one of the many mysterious points in their most mysterious history. Charles the Second can have had no great love for them, for his father had fled before them at Naseby and he himself at Worcester; and he must have learned to loathe the sight of them while hiding from their pursuit after the battle. James, again, cannot have had pleasant recollections of them, for they had put both his brother and himself to flight at the battle on the dunes of Dunkirk. Possibly Monk's army of salvation may have popularised them

once more;¹ or again the men themselves may have grown attached to them and thus rendered their abolition by the restored King impolitic. As some regiments simply grounded arms as soldiers of the Commonwealth, and took them up again as soldiers of the King, a very few happily-chosen words would have sufficed to show them that they could wear the old colour with even greater honour as the King's men than as the Commonwealth's. This, however, is mere conjecture; the one thing certain is that the Red-Coats survived this their greatest peril, for are they not with us to this day, more widely diffused than ever, and, thanks in some measure perhaps to Mr. Kipling, more respected than they were? Possibly we may yet see the day when such a disgraceful spectacle as that of a row of advertising "sandwichmen" clad (as I recently saw them) in the cast red tunics of honoured and honourable regiments will suffice to kindle a street-riot. It is frequently said that our army is useless, inefficient, and so forth; but can a nation be said to deserve a good army when it openly permits in the streets of the capital city of the Empire the degradation of so old, so honourable, and so renowned an institution as the Red Coat?

J. W. FORTESCUE.

¹ In the pictures at Hampton Court of Charles the Second's departure from Holland, all the soldiers are in scarlet.

MISS STUART'S LEGACY.¹

BY MRS. STEEL.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SOME ten days after this John Raby came from the office into the drawing-room with a letter in his hand and vexation on his face. "Upon my word, Belle," he began, "you have a most unfortunate turn for philanthropy, as I always told you. I've no doubt your doctoring that little croupy imp suggested the idea that we were made up of benevolence. Sentiment, my dear child, is the devil in business."

"What is it now, John?" she asked, with an effort at lightness. For all that, her tone made him raise his eyebrows impatiently. There is no accounting for the jar which comes at times between two natures, especially when circumstances are emphasising their respective individualities. This was the case between Belle and her husband; her conscientiousness being hyper-sensitised by constant self-blame, and his being dulled by the keen desire to triumph over all opposition.

"Only that bankrupt old warrior appealing through Marsden to the firm for an annual supply of water from my dam. A cool request, isn't it? And Marsden, of course, being sentimental as you are, hopes it will be done. All I can say is, that it is lucky he and you have me to look after your interests."

"But if it could be done——"

"My dear child, don't you think I'd have done it had the thing been possible without detriment to us? I don't suppose Marsden thought of it in that light, but he ought to have done so. I have my faults no doubt, but I'm not an ogre."

"I wish it had been possible!"

"So do I; but it isn't. Therefore, if you don't mind, I hope you will refrain from arousing Philip's benevolence more than you can help. I mean by allusions to the old man and the child. They are a most picturesque couple, of course, but if sentiment is to come in, I may as well throw up the whole business. For mind you, Belle, it is just as well you should know that the factory is bound to be unpopular at first."

"Unpopular! Why?" asked Belle in surprise. "I thought you said it would improve the condition of the people immensely."

"After a time. However it is no use discussing it. I shall write to Marsden and say,—well, I shall say, chiefly, that I also am filled with pious and benevolent intentions, but that I desire a free hand. Meanwhile, as I see from Philip's letter that Afzul has been priming you with pity which you have been handing on, I wish you wouldn't. Give the old man as much money as you like, of course; but don't egg my partner on to socialism, there's a good girl." He looked very bright and handsome as he bent over and kissed her. "Do you know, Belle," he said, laughingly, "you are the most transparent fraud in creation. I believe you set the old man on to Marsden, now didn't you?"

She flushed scarlet. "I only told Afzul when he was speaking of it that the best way was to write a petition. And Philip was an old friend."

"Just so; but we don't want old friends, or new ones either, to interfere. I'm manager of this factory,

¹ Copyright 1893, by Macmillan and Co.

and I intend to manage it my own way."

"Do you mean without consulting Philip's wishes?"

He turned round on her sharply as he was leaving the room. "That is about it. He knows nothing of business, and should be glad to have some one to act for him who does."

There was, as usual, so much sound common sense in her husband's words that Belle tried to crush down the dissatisfaction she could not help feeling at the idea of Philip being made responsible for actions of which he might know nothing. After all, had it really come to this, that she did not trust her husband to behave uprightly? The thought was poison to all peace, and she thrust it aside in horror at its very appearance. Yet a new element of trouble had entered into life, and she found herself quite unconsciously keeping ears and eyes open for things which she had previously ignored. This did not escape her husband's keen sight, and in his light half-serious way he rallied her on this newly-developed interest in the business. The fact was they were beginning to understand each other too well; and now and again a tone came into John's voice which sent the blood to her heart in a throb of fear and made her positively grovel before her ideal of wifely duty. Then her husband would recover his careless good-nature, and the household run so smoothly that even Belle's high-strung nerves scarcely felt a jolt.

So the spring came, bringing to the garden a rush of blossom well-nigh impossible of description to those accustomed to slow northern lands. Belle could have picked clothes-baskets full of *Maréchal Niel* roses from the bushes and yet have left them burdened with great yellow cups. The pomegranates glowed with a scarlet positively dazzling to the eyes; the gardenias were all too strongly scented; the bees and butterflies drugged themselves with honey from the wild tangle of overgrown, overblown

annuals which, forgetting their trim English habit, usurped the very paths by thickets of *mignonette*, sweet pea, *dianthus*, and a host of other familiar flowers. Belle, walking round her domain in the early morning when the nightly gift of dew still lay on the leaves, used to wonder how serpents could creep into such a paradise. The very isolation of the life had an irresistible charm. What was the use of worrying about ideas? Where was the good of fretting over the mischances of the world which lay beyond this calm retreat?

Suddenly, however, that world asserted its existence. She had still kept up her habit of morning rides, and though her husband was now up with the dawn he was far too much absorbed in his work to accompany her save when business sent him beyond his own boundaries. Even then she began to notice his excuses for escaping her companionship, and when in her drowsy content she went so far as to express a half-jesting remonstrance, he would reply in the same tone, that he had no intention of slaving for ever, and that this was his working day. By and by, when he had turned *Marsden* adrift, and could have the whole thing to himself,—why he meant to have it and enjoy it. Meanwhile it was much pleasanter for her to ride along the river-bank and through the inundation-lands, than in the dust southwards where his business took him so often. But this level expanse of bare fruitless soil had an attraction for Belle; and one day, losing her way on it, she made for the landmark of a village on the horizon, and thus found herself considerably beyond her usual distance from home. It was a village with poverty and sloth written on the blistered, rain-marked mud walls, and in the absence of fuel-heaps and thorn-enclosures. A sorry forsaken spot it was, despite the swarm of low-bred-looking brats who came out to stare as she rode at a foot's pace through the widest lane. A woman

stood slouching at the entrance to a courtyard, and Belle, pausing, asked her the way to Nilganj. The scowl on the face raised to hers startled her, so did the words: "Are you Raby's *mem*?"

Her answering assent met a rude reception in the curt recommendation to find the way herself, accompanied by a sudden closing of the door. Then came a shrill clamour of voices from within, and one by one, over the alley walls dark disapproving faces full of angry curiosity. The display of hostility might have gone no further if her horse, restive at being checked, and, no doubt, disliking the crowd of children following close on its heels, had not sidled and backed, putting the young imps to hustling flight. This was naturally the signal for shrieks and abuse from the mothers, and though a touch of the whip recalled her beast to duty, humanity was not so reasonable. A little ragamuffin took up a piece of dirt and threw it after her; the others approved, and though fear of her horse's heels kept the little arms at a comparatively safe distance, Belle Raby had nevertheless to submit to the indignity of riding through the village pursued by pelting urchins, and by no means pleasant abuse from over the walls. Her indignation was greater than her fear or even than her surprise, and the scornful glance with which she met the angry eyes on a level with her own silenced more than one of the tongues. But for a sense that it would have been undignified, she would dearly have loved to dismount, seize one of the ringleaders and administer summary justice. The possible meaning of this unusual reception did not strike her until, emerging from the village, still pursued by her tormentors, she came straight upon her husband. His look, as he recognised the position, filled her with alarm; and there was something in it of such absolutely uncontrolled passion and hatred, that it flashed upon her that he, at least,

must have good reason to understand the scene. "John! don't do anything; please don't!" she cried as he threw himself from his horse. "They are only children."

"I'm not going to run after those little demons, if you mean that," he replied, giving her the reins of his mount to hold; "but they have parents, I suppose. I'll be back in a moment. Don't be afraid, Belle; they are curs, every one of them. But they shall pay for this, in more ways than one."

He came out five minutes afterwards, followed by a protesting and most venerable looking pantaloon, representative of that past age in which a white face was verily a sign of kingship. He took no notice of the lavish appeals and apologies, but, putting his note-book in his pocket, remounted. "I'm sorry you came this way," he said as they rode off; "but, as I often say, you have a faculty for getting into mischief which is surprising in such an eminently virtuous person as you are, Belle. However, you mustn't do it again. In fact I should prefer your keeping to my land for the next two or three months."

Belle, given time to think, had lost much of her courage in dismay at this most unexpected insight into the world beyond her gates. Could such a state of affairs be necessary? "Why,——" she began.

"My dear child, don't ask *me* why; I can't supply reason to these pig-headed brutes. And don't, for goodness' sake make a fuss over it, and bring Marsden's soft-heartedness down on me just when I need to have a free hand. I told you I should be unpopular, and I am; that is the long and short of it; more unpopular than need be, for somehow the people have got an idea that I could help if I chose. Why didn't Marsden put their appeals in the waste-paper basket, as I do, instead of raising hopes by referring to me?"

"Has he been referring to you?"

Her husband looked at her and laughed. "I'm not going to give myself away in confidence. As I said before, I'm awfully sorry you came out this way and chanced on that village. It is the worst about here. For all that, there is no need for any anxiety, I assure you. Afzul and his bandits are worth a hundred of these curs; and once the people see I am a man of my word, they will come in sharp enough."

"But if Philip——"

"Bother Philip! He is a trump of course, but I think he has mixed himself up a little too much in this business. I shall be glad when he is out of it."

"Surely if you were to explain——"

"My dear Belle, explanation is nothing to demonstration. In six weeks' time, when the first flood comes, I shall prove myself right, and waltz in, hands down, an easy winner. That is to say if nobody fouls me now out of goodness, and righteousness, and all charitableness."

It was one thing to be told this, another to find comfort in it, and as the days passed Belle grew more and more uneasy. She felt sure all could not be fair and square; that there must be some antagonistic element at work to make the unpopularity so intense. Perhaps because she watched for it so keenly, it seemed to her that discontent showed itself more and more freely on the faces of the people she did meet in her now limited walks. One evening she had a bad five minutes listening to a row in the coolies' quarters with her husband's clear voice dominating the clamour. She was still pale when he came whistling through the garden as if nothing had happened. It was only, he said, a war of words between Kirpo and Afzul. There had always been a jealousy between them; the latter declaring that such a hideous female was not worthy to touch any man's bread,—for the former had risen by favour from mere cooliedom to cook for a gang of Hindoo workers;

the woman retorting that the hillmen were no better than pirates, ready to steal her supplies if her back was turned, for all their professions of horror at meats prepared by idolaters. Afzul had been growing idle and uppish of late; so John had sided with Kirpo in this particular dispute.

"I think Kirpo is rather uppish too," replied Belle. "I heard her ordering some of the men about as if she was their mistress."

Her husband laughed easily. "Just like a native! Kirpo is useful to me at present, by giving me information I can rely upon; and she presumes on the fact. When the floods have come I shall be able to dispense with her,—with a variety of things, in fact. I shall not be sorry; I hate being beholden to people."

Belle bent her head over her work and sewed faster. "I don't like Afzul, I don't like Kirpo, and I like the unpopularity least of all. Oh, John, could you not give way a little? I am sure Philip——"

"Now look here, Belle; I said just now that I hated being beholden to any one, and you yourself made enough to do when I borrowed this money from Marsden. And you've fussed and worried about it ever since, because you think he consented for your sake. Perhaps he did; and so I mean to show him he should have consented for his own. I call that a laudable ambition which should satisfy your pride. Now in my opinion the only road to success lies my way. That, I think, should settle the matter once and for all. Of course I am not infallible; but, unless something very unexpected turns up, you will be laughing at your own fears this time two months. Now, as I told Kirpo to come up to the office as soon as it was dark, let me get some peace and quiet first. I think Haydn would suit me to-day; there is no forced sentiment in him, jolly old chap!"

So Belle played Haydn, and John dozed in his chair till the darkness settled deep enough to hide Kirpo as

she stole through bye-paths to the office verandah. There behind a creeper-hung pillar she waited till John's tall figure showed itself at the writing-table. Then she went forward, and raising the bamboo curtain said softly : "I am here, *Huzoor* !"

"All right ! Come in and shut the door."

Some one hiding in the oleander bushes in full view of this incident muttered a curse, and settled himself down in a new position. So what Shunker had said was true, and, disfigured as she was, Kirpo still kept her hold on the *Shaitan sahib*. But for a promise he had made to the usurer not to anticipate the great revenge brewing for John Raby's discomfiture, Rāmu (for it was he, once more out of prison) would have asked nothing better than to have waited patiently till Kirpo appeared again, and then in the darkness to have fallen on her and killed her outright. As it was he sat with eyes fixed on the door, controlling his passion by the thought of future and less hazardous revenge upon them both. He had a long knife tucked away in his waistcloth, but it seemed to him as if he could feel its sharp edge and see its gleaming curve plunging into flesh. Truly a venomous, dangerous animal to be lurking among the white oleanders in Belle's paradise, as she sat playing Haydn, and John, with a contemptuous smile on his face, was listening to Kirpo's tales. She knew a good deal did Kirpo, but not all. She did not know, for instance, that her husband lay among the oleanders, else she might have hesitated in playing the part of spy, though she was no coward, and her revengeful desires were keen.

By and by she came out, and a crouching, shadowy figure followed her through the garden, and then struck across the barren plain to the village which John Raby had described as the worst of the lot ; the village of which Belle used persistently to dream ; the village where even the children looked at her with eyes of hate. Her husband

did not dream of anything. He used to sleep the sleep of the just, and wake fresh as a lark to the pursuit of the one reality in his life,—money. And even in its pursuit he was content, because it occupied him so thoroughly that he had no time to notice minor details. Sometimes Belle irritated him, but the instant after he would smile ; it was a way women, especially good women, had ; they could not help it. Sometimes he fell foul in spirit of his senior partner, but not for long. What were such trivialities in comparison with the main fact of general success ? Belle was a good wife, Marsden a good friend ; above all, the concern was a good concern, a rattling good business ; and he, John Raby, had plucked the plum out of Shunker's very hands. That last thought was always provocative of a smile.

Meanwhile the Lāla was smiling too. The re-appearance of Rāmu, who seemed to keep all his virtue for the purpose of procuring a ticket-of-leave, had considerably strengthened the usurer's hands by providing him with one absolutely reckless tool. When the time came for setting fire to the carefully laid train he would not have to seek for a match ; and that, when one had to deal with these slow-brained peasants, was a great gain. With such a leader he looked forward confidently to mischief sooner or later. Kirpo might tell tales, but there were some tales Shunker meant to keep secret, till the right moment came for turning passive opposition into active interference.

CHAPTER XXIV.

BELLE's paradise did not last long. In less than three weeks the hot winds came to shrivel the bursting buds and turn even the promise of blossom into a sign of death. The sunshine took a deeper yellow glow, the blue faded from the sky, an impalpable dust began to settle on all things. Down in the sand stretches below the house the network of the river grew finer day by day,

and the mud-banks left by shrinking streams assumed airs of perpetuity by clothing themselves with green herbs, as if the time of floods were not nigh to swallow them up once more. All else, far and near, seemed fainting in a great thirst, longing for the crisis which was to bring them life.

But Belle, though the floods had not yet come, felt, one calm still morning, as if the waters had gone over her head, and she had no power to resist the current which swept her from her feet. It was a trivial thing which roused the feeling, only a word or two in one of Philip's letters which she held in her hand as she stood beside her husband's writing-table.

"I quite admit it, my dear girl," he was saying calmly. "Marsden has written to me on that subject several times, and I have replied as I thought fit. It is quite possible I may have given him the impression I was willing, or even that I was going to do more than has really been done. What then?"

"Only this," she replied hotly; "that you have degraded him in the eyes of these people. He promised inquiry and——"

"He had no business to promise anything. He referred it to me, and he has no right to complain of my decision."

"He does not complain! When has he ever complained?" she interrupted, trying hard to keep the passion from her voice. "You can read what he says, if you like. He thinks,—I do not ask how—that you have done your best."

"Exactly; I have done my best for the business."

"He did not mean that. Oh, John, the shame of it will kill me! To take everything from a man, even his honour and good name——"

"You don't appear to be so much concerned about mine. But I promised to pay Philip back his money in two years, and I mean to do it. Be reasonable, my dear child. Some one must take the responsibility; some one must

take the odium which is unfortunately inseparable from success. Why should you complain because I take it cheerfully?"

Belle crushed the letter closer in vexed despair. "I can never make you understand! Do you not see it is a question of right and wrong? You have taken his money and are using it as he would hate to have it used. You have,—I do not say deceived him—but kept the truth from him; and even if you succeed, what will you be doing but giving him money gained as he would have scorned to gain it?"

Her husband laughed a very ugly laugh, and for the first time his face showed some emotion. "I always knew you thought Marsden perfect, but I wasn't aware of your estimate of my comparative virtue. I cannot say I'm flattered by it."

"I can't help it," she said, almost with a sob. "I can't see things in the light you see them."

"That is a mutual disability, so for heaven's sake let us agree to differ. The thing is done. Even if I wished to do so, the sluice could not be built now. The river is due in three weeks, or sooner, and any interference with the dam at present must mean disaster to all concerned. I tell you this because I want you to understand that now, at any rate, my hands are tied."

"Perhaps,—I mean, no doubt; but he must be told, and—and given his choice. It is not right——"

"Tell him, my dear, if it pleases you to do so; though I think it is a pity, for in two months' time, if all this fuss doesn't play the devil with my plans, the difficulties will be over. By the way, what do you propose to tell him? That I have behaved like a scoundrel?"

"You have no right to say such things, John!" she cried indignantly.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Well! That I have behaved as he would have scorned to behave? &c., &c. It seems to me about the same thing in different words."

The flush which rose to her face told how hard she was hit. That was the mischief of it all,—that fatal comparison between these two men, against which she had struggled in vain. Why should she have compared them? Why even now should she not let things be and trust to John's superior wisdom? For he was wise in such matters, and, heaven knows, gave himself up wholly to insure success. How could she tell Philip? What was she to tell him? Yet he must know; even for John's sake he ought to know what was being done in his name. "I will ask him to come here," she said with an effort, "then he can see for himself."

John Raby looked up quickly. "Very well, do so. Only remember this; I disclaim all responsibility for what may happen, and I tell you fairly I mean to have my own way. You know perfectly well that I consider quarrelling mere waste of time; but if the position becomes awkward, that will be your doing, not mine."

"I will tell him to come," repeated Belle slowly.

"Then that's settled. Perhaps it may be best, after all," he added, his face losing its last trace of vexation. "Indeed I thought of asking him before; but the fact is that the last time he was here you showed your uneasiness so distinctly that I hesitated."

Once more the colour rose to his wife's face as she turned away. Was everything from beginning to end her fault, she wondered as she sent off a telegram asking Philip to come, if he could get leave. She chose a telegram more because it relieved her from the necessity of giving her reasons than from any desire to save time, and so accelerate the explanations she dreaded. Yet when, late in the evening of the next day, John, coming from the factory, told her with a certain elation in his voice that the river was on the rise, she clasped her hands nervously and wished Philip had wings.

All the next day she found herself going to the verandah whence she could see the sandy flats, and wondering if those distant streaks of water were indeed creeping nearer.

"The barometer's falling fast, so I'm afraid your philanthropy comes a little too late, Belle," said John when he came in to lunch; "but personally I'm glad the floods will be early. I don't mind confessing to a little anxiety as to whether the dam will work, and it will be a relief to see you looking less worried. I think every one is too much on the strain just now, even Afzul. He was only saved from throwing up his place this morning by the news that Philip was coming to-morrow; so you see your plan has done some good already."

The night closed dark and hazy, and Belle's last look from the verandah showed her nothing but dim distances stretching away to a lighter horizon. She could not sleep, yet she would not make any stir, and she lay awake wondering what forces were at work among the shadows, and what the dawn would bring forth.

"John, John!" she cried, touching his shoulder to rouse him when the first glimmer of light came to reveal the labour of the night. "The floods are out right up to the high bank!"

He was on his feet in an instant. "By George, I *am* in luck!" he cried. "It will take them all by surprise. Tell them to bring tea, Belle; I must be off to the dam at once, and don't expect me back till lunch. Marsden will excuse me, and besides," he gave a little light laugh, "it will give you leisure to get over your confession. It's awfully nice to have some one to be penitent in your place. It saves a lot of bother. Don't you remember Florac's reply to Pendennis about his mother's tears?—'You must have made her weep a good deal,' says Pen. 'Mais énormément, mon cher!'"

A few minutes later he had left her with a kindly good-bye, and a recommendation to take things easily as he did. As she walked up and down the

verandah waiting for Philip's arrival, she asked herself more than once whether it would not be wiser to follow John's advice. Now that the last chance of remedy was over for the present, why should she give herself the pain of acknowledging that she condemned her husband's action? Drifting this way and that in the current of thought, as many another thing swept from its moorings was drifting in the floods beneath her eyes, she had reached no certain conclusion when the even tread of the horse, which they had sent to meet Philip, brought her back to action with a strange dread of herself. He was beside her in an instant, and though she had worded her telegram so as to avoid anxiety, it was clearly evident in his face.

"Well, what is it?" he said, still holding her outstretched hand of welcome, and looking into her face curiously.

"Nothing," she answered hurriedly; "nothing in the least important. Only—I wanted to see you. Come in; you must be tired, that beast has such rough paces; I would have sent Sulieman, but he is lame. Come in, tea is ready."

So she ran on, and Philip, who, to say sooth, had been on tenter-hooks ever since the receipt of her summons, had to fall into her mood, not without a certain sense of injury. But the pleasure of being within touch of her hand and sight of her face was irresistible, so that the following hours seemed to take him back to the most perfect memory of his whole life, to that evening at Saudaghur which he and she had spent together in thoughtless, unreasoning content. Perhaps this memory cast its glamour over Belle likewise; certain it is that something beat down and overwhelmed all thought and care. John, coming in almost late for lunch, found them laughing over the last week's "Punch" which Philip had brought with him; and taking his cue quickly, if with some contemptuous surprise,

dropped his serious air and became the genial host. Never was there a gayer or more light-hearted trio; but outside the house the clear promise of the morning had dulled to a yellow haze, and every now and again a swirl of dust swept past, making the yellow deeper.

"In for the first *andi* of the season," said John Raby standing by the window. "The natives say it is a sign of a healthy year to have a dust-storm early. More good luck, you see, Belle! There is nothing like keeping a calm sough and trusting to Providence. Doesn't it make you feel 'heavenly calm,' Marsden, to be here in this jolly room and know that outside, in all that dust and pother, the elements are working together for your good?"

Philip laughed. "I feel very well content, thank you. The comfort of contrast always appeals to my selfish nature."

"Hark to that, Belle! I'll never believe in Philip's saintship again," cried her husband triumphantly. "Well, I must be off; there was the tiniest crumble in the dam, and I must get my bandits to work on it before dark. By the way, Marsden, Afzul said he was coming to see you this afternoon. If so, sit on him. The beggar has been half mutinous of late. Faugh! what an atmosphere; but I dare say it will be better outside."

"How well he is looking," said Philip, as he watched the figure disappearing through the haze. "I wish I could see you do more credit to the 'heavenly calm.'" He made the remark lightly enough, thinking only of his first glance at her when he arrived; a glance which had prompted his swift inquiry as to what was the matter. But he was startled out of all save surprise by the look on her face as she turned towards him from the window.

"Heavenly calm!" she echoed almost wildly. "Yes, for you and for

Electrical dust-storm.

me, and for him; but for the others? You asked me, and I said nothing was the matter. It was a lie; everything is the matter! Outside there, in the dust,—” as she spoke the hand she had laid on his arm in her vehemence tightened to a clutch, her eyes fixed themselves on something. “John!” she cried. “He is coming back, running! Oh, what is it, what is it?”

Almost before he could grasp her meaning the door burst open, and John Raby was back in the room, calm for all his excitement. “Quick, Marsden, quick! get your revolver,—the fools are at the dam! There’s treachery, and not a moment to lose! Quick, man, quick!”

“Treachery! What? How? I don’t understand—Belle, what is the matter?”

For she had thrown herself between him and her husband, and stood with one hand on his breast as if to push him back. “He shall not go; he does not understand!” she cried passionately. “I tell you he shall not go until I have told him all. He does not know, he does not understand; it is not fair, Philip!”

“Don’t heed her, Marsden; it’s all fancy, and there is no time for words. I tell you they are at the dam,—the fools!” cried John, his self-control seeming to give way at the very thought of danger to the work of his hands. “Belle, let him go! I command you,—I entreat—”

But she stood firm, every fibre of her nature tense in this final conflict, a conflict not so much between the two men as between her instincts and her beliefs. And yet the sense of personal injury so long repressed made her words reckless. “You have taken everything from him; everything that makes life worth living—even his love. And because of that he has given up everything without a word; and now you ask his honour, his life, in a bad cause; but you shall not have it! Philip! if you love me,—if you love your own good name,—

stay where you are. It is I who command it!”

With an oath John Raby dashed past her to the office, but ere Philip had time to do more than unclasp, as gently as he could, the arms she had flung about his neck, her husband was back again, revolver in hand, his clear face blurred by anger, sheer animal anger.

“Belle!” he cried, beside himself with uncontrolled passion, “don’t add this folly to your other foolishness. Think! I am your husband; so choose between us. Choose between us, I say, or by God—”

She interrupted him in tones so bitter that no escape remained from their finality. “Choose. Yes! I have chosen at last—at last! Philip shall not suffer.”

His answer came swiftly: “Then stay with your lover; I might have known I was a fool to trust a woman.”

Ere the echo of his voice died away he was out in the storm again leaving those two in a silence worse than the words just spoken. He had disengaged her arms, but her hands had tightened themselves on his, and so they stood face to face, looking into each other’s eyes. But in his lay a pity and tenderness before which hers failed and fell.

“You must not go,” she whispered, low and fast. “I have not told you, and I ought to have told you. He had no right to use your name, to be so hard; and they may kill you. I have a right to tell you,—surely I have a right to so much?”

Her warm clasp held him unresisting; yet in his heart of hearts he was not thinking of her, only of some expedient which should avoid the last resource of brute force; for with all his tenderness his pride was in arms. “Have I not given you enough, Belle?” he said hoarsely. “Will you not even leave me my courage?”

With a sob she flung his hands from her as if they bit and stung. “Go!” she cried. “You are unjust, ungenerous; but go!”

He did not wait. Torn as he was by love and compassion for the woman he was leaving so forsaken and abased, he could not pause in the mad hurry which seized him, even for a word of comfort; time, if he was to retrieve his self-respect and hers, was too precious for anything save action. Another instant and he was searching frantically for his revolver among his half-unpacked things, and feeling a certain fierce joy in anticipation of the struggle to come. A quick snatch, a breathless relief, and he looked up to find Afzul Khân standing by the only door of exit from the room. "Afzul!" he cried, "why are you here? Why are you not at your post when there is danger afoot? Follow me at once!"

But the Pathan's answer was to close the door and stand with his arm thrown across it, bolt-wise. Then he looked at the Major boldly, yet respectfully. "I'm here, *Huzoor*, because I have grown tired of helping a tyrant. The *sahib* should be tired of it too and take his reward. That is what I came to make known to the Presence."

"Let me pass, fool!" shouted Philip, struggling to get at the door. But Afzul was his match in strength and, even as he resisted, found time for words. "Listen, *Huzoor*. If it is the money, let it go. I have here in my pocket something that will put more money into the *mem's* hand. So you can have her and the money too."

"Are you mad? Let me pass, I say, or it will be the worse for you!"

"For you, *Huzoor*. There is danger; the men mean fight, but if Raby *sahib* has none to back him, he will choose prudence. He wrought the evil—I will not stir, *sahib*, till you have listened—he wrought the evil, let him bear the loss. You——"

Philip gave one glance round for other means of escape, and then the breathless hurry of the last few moments left his voice and manner. "Stand back Afzul," he said quietly, "or I'll fire. One,—two,—three!——"

An instant's pause, and the hand on the trigger wavered. Something, the memory of those days and nights in the smoky cave, perhaps, came between Philip and the wrist he aimed at, for the ball struck the door below it, splintering the wood. But that waver, slight though it was, caught the Pathan's quick eye. He threw up his arm with a laugh of malicious triumph. "We are quits, *Huzoor*! We have both been fools before the other's bravery; that is the end, the end at last!"

The meaning of his words, even the words themselves, were lost on Philip, who was already down the verandah steps, his head bent low as he ran to save himself from being blinded by the swirl of dust which now swept past continuously. Afzul scowled after the retreating figure. "Fool!" he muttered between his teeth. "But I have done with him now—done with everything save this accursed letter. I wish I had sent it to the *mem* at first. It belongs to her, and she is the best of the bunch."

So muttering he made his way to the verandah, and raising the bamboo screen looked into the drawing-room. Belle, crushed to a dull endurance by the consciousness of her own impotence to aid,—nay more, with the very desire to help killed by the awful knowledge that both those men had flung her aside as something beneath their manhood—had thrown herself face downward on the sofa, where she lay with clenched hands, striving to regain some power of thought or action; yet in the very effort driving herself to greater helplessness by her wild insistence that time was passing, that she must decide, must do something.

"*Huzoor*!"

She started to her feet, and found Afzul beside her with outstretched hand. The sight, by rousing a physical fear, brought back the courage which never failed her at such times. "Well?" she asked boldly.

"I am not come to hurt you, *Huzoor*, but to give you this. It belongs to you."

She put out her hand mechanically and took a small package done up, native fashion, in a bit of old brocade.

"To me,—what is it?" she asked in a dull tone.

"It is Dick *sahib's* will. He died fighting like the brave one he was; but they were all brave, those three,—Dick *sahib*, and Marsden *sahib*, and Raby *sahib*. They die fighting,—curse them!"

They die fighting! With the first cry she had given Belle broke from him, and, still clutching the packet, followed in the footsteps of those two; and as she ran, beaten back by the wind and half-blinded by the sand, she scarcely thought of their safety, only that she might get there in time. Only in time, dear God! only in time to show them that she was brave also.

The lurid yellow of the dust-storm had darkened or lightened everything to the same dull tint; the sand beneath her feet, the sky above, the swaying trees between, each and all seemed like shadows thrown upon a screen, and her own flying figure the only reality

in an empty world of dreams. Not a sound save the broad rush of the wind, not a sight save the dim dust-hazed paths bordered by shrivelled flowers. Then, beyond the garden, the long curve of the dam, the deeper sinking into dun-coloured soil of those frantic feet; and, running with her as she ran, the swirls and dimples of the yellow river angry for all its silence.

If only she might be in time! There, in the centre of the curve, like a swarm of bees, shifting, crowding, pressing,—was that John's fair head in the centre? If the wind were only the other way she might have heard, even if she could not see; but now, even if they were crying for help, she would not hear!—

Suddenly her stumbling flight ceased in a stumbling pause. Was that the wind? She threw up her hands without a cry and stood as if turned to stone. It seemed to her as if the seconds beat themselves in on her brain— one—two—three—four—five—not more than that; then a low dull roar ending in silence; silence and peace, for she lay huddled up in a heap upon the ground as if struck by lightning.

(To be continued.)

